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ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide demonstrates how the "Ramayana," one of India's epic literary treasures, can be used in a literature unit in English classes for ninth-grade students. The unit incorporates a useful comparison to the Greek epic, the "Odyssey." Included in this curriculum guide are the following sections: the text (an English version of the Ramayana); a map; notes to accompany the text; notes to the teacher; teaching the "Odyessey" and the "Ramayana"; "Cultural values embodied by characters in the "Ramayana" and the "Odyssey": a comparative analysis): (by Thomas J. Lynn); guide questions for the "Ramayana"; vocabulary (English words requiring definition); assignments for the unit (including writing topics, telling the story to others, and composition topics); similes, metaphors, and personifications in the "Ramayana"; a test for the "Ramayana" unit; and some cut-outs which can be used to create Ramayana dolls. (HB)

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THE RAMAYANA:

India's Odyssey

Based on the Edition

Edited by William Buck

With Illustrations by Shirley Triest

Introduction by B.A. Van Nooten

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1992

THE RAMAYANA UNIT

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Curriculum materials developed by Gaynell M. Fuchs, Kamehameha Schools, Honolulu, Hawaii

Introductory material on the Ramayana and comparative analysis with the Odyssey by Thomas J. Lynn, University of Arkansas.

THE RAMAYANA

The first part of the Ramayana tells of Rama's youth and of his meeting with Sita. It sets the scene in Ayodhya and explains why Rama's stepmother is demanding his exile for fourteen years.

Rama and Sita lived in Rama's black stone Palace of the Moon, and twelve years went by in Ayodhya. Little by little Dasaratha turned over the work of the kingdom to Rama.

Rama's nature was quiet and free. He didn't give good advice and tell others what he thought best and show them their mistakes. He knew when to save and when to spend. He could judge men finely and keep his own counsel. He could read hearts. He knew his own faults better than the failings of others. He could speak well and reason in a chain of eloquent words. Half a benefit was more to him than a hundred injuries. Bad accidents never happened near him. He could speak every language and was an expert archer who shot golden arrows; and he didn't believe that what he preferred from himself was always best for everyone else.

Rama was kind and courteous and never ill. To harsh words he returned no blame. He was warmhearted and generous and a real friend to all. He tried living right and found it easier than he'd thought. He collected the King's taxes so that over half the people didn't really mind paying him. He was a remarkable prince and every Kosala loved him except for five or six fools. He was hospitable and he spoke first to every guest in welcome words. He was a quiet strong man; he could bend iron in his hands or fix a bird's broken wing. He would not scold the whole world nor take to task the universe, and so his pleasure and his anger never went for nothing.

Rama would not work very long without a holiday; he wouldn't walk far without stopping to greet a friend, nor speak long without smiling. His entertainments and dances were the best in the world. He loved Sita well; he lived his life for the sake of her being a part of it. He would often find a new gift for his friends. He did not fear to pass a whole day without work. Whatever he did, he ennobled it by how he did it. Rama's way was noble.

Finally, Rama's stepmother has made her wishes law. Rama goes to Sita, his wife, and explains that he must go into exile.

Rama went alone to Sita and said, "The time will quickly pass, you will soon see me return."

She answered softly, "It is very strange, My Lord, that you alone among all men in the world have not heard that a wife and her husband are one."

"There is no happiness in the forest," said Rama. "There is danger. Lions roar and keep pitiless watch from the mouths of their hill-caves, waterfalls crash and pain the ears, and so the wood is full of misery."

"Surely your fortune is also mine," said Sita.

"Enraged elephants in their fury trample men to death."

"Kings in cities execute their faithful friends at any hour, day or night."

"There is little to eat but windfallen fruit and white roots."

"I will eat after you have taken your share of them."

"There is no water, vines shut out the Sun, at night there are but hard beds of leaves."

"I will gather flowers."

"Creeping serpents slither across the trails and swim crookedly in the rivers awaiting prey."

"The wayfarer will see flocks of colored birds fly and disappear into shady trees."

"There is always hunger and darkness and great fear," said Rama. "Scorpions sting and poison the blood; there is fever in the air, fires rage uncontrolled; there are no dear friends nearby, and so the wood is full of misery."

"It is Ayodhya that would be the widerness for me without you," said Sita. "Your bow is no decoration, your knife is not for wood-chopping, your arrows are not toys, but keep me from your arguments. We will be together. The water will be nectar, the thistles silk, the raw hides many-colored blankets. I'll be no burden. Rama, I depend on you. I cannot be cast away like water left in a cup. Dear Rama, I am the humble dust at your feet, perfectly happy. How will you avoid me?"

"Then come," smiled Rama. "You love me and I love you, what more is there? Without delay give away all our possessions that we won't take with us, and get ready to go."

Rama and Sita prepare to leave, assisted by Rama's brother, Lakshmana, Vasishtha,a family priest, and Sumantra who will drive the royal chariot.

Rama and Lakshmana and Sita met Vasishtha by a small back door to the palace. Rama and Lakshmana first put on their impenetrable armor all of gold, and Lakshmana put on a black hide belt with a gold-handled belt-knife. Then over that they put on the two pieces of soft dyed barkcloth worn by ascetics, tied on belts of grass, put on forest sandals. And Vasishtha said, "Rama, never forget the weapons you learned from Viswamitra."

Sita held some bark clothes, cast down her eyes and asked Vasishtha, "Brahmana, how do hermits dress in these?"

"A knot by the waist," said Vasishtha, "but throw those down. Wear your silks and ornaments, Kaikeyi had not her eye on you, and the wishes say nothing of this."

Vasishtha turned to Sita and said, "You do not forsake your Lord in misfortune, I salute you, I bless you!"

He told Lakshmana, "Prince, this design of yours to serve Rama is already a great blessing to you, a great good fortune, your high wide way to heaven. You follow him, I salute you, I bless you."

Then the brahmana Vasishtha embraced Sumantra the Charioteer. *So there is still one good heart in the Kosala Kingdom! I see honor, I see again that proud warriors' Dharma of kindliness and bravery and gladly casting off the body on the battlefield of war. I see fairness and skill and courage once more! That is the Kshatriya Dharma that I remember. It is good to see, old man, good to see!*

Lakshmana put Rama's fire inside a bowl in a corner of the chariot. Sumantra put bows and arrows on board, and under the driver's seat in front he put a hoe and a root-gathering basket bound in goathide. Vasishtha helped Sita get on the car; the two princes climbed up; Sumantra got on and the exile began.

Sumantra held the reins. The four horses raised their heads, the chariot trembled, it seemed to come alive. Sumantra said, "Go."

The red horses ran. They were out of the back palace courtyard, through the palace gates, and racing wildly down the street to the southern gate of Ayodhya.

For a moment Sumantra faced the chariot north to invoke good fortune and a successful journey. And Rama stood facing Ayodhya and touching his hands together he said, "Best of cities, I will see you again, the gods guard you well."

Sumantra said, "Quickly get on." They drove away from Fair Ayodhya to the lands of the southwest. The forest track soon joined the south road. The countryside of Kosala stretched out away in the distance; far as the eye could see the round trees rose from the flat plains. All day they rode through the kingdom of Kosala stopping only for noonday prayers. The villages and the fields grew fewer and farther between, then in the late afternoon there were no more settlements. They saw no more white cattle and no houses or ponds—only the forest closing in on them. Their road began to fail. It turned into a cowpath and then vanished. They were crossing the southern boundary of Kosala. At dusk Sumantra stopped the chariot by the Ganga River flowing from heaven through Shiva's hair; Rama got down with the others, and they walked a little way and stood under a huge ancient spreading nut tree.

That tree marked the Kingdom of the Far Forest and the realm of Guha the Hunter King. Rama and Sita, Lakshmana and Sumantra all bathed in the beautiful Ganges, where bathing a man may wash off the sins from his heart as he takes the dirt from his skin, and both come out clean.

Then as they stood in wet clothes under the trees of the Secret Forest, they heard whistles from the wood and looked in their direction. They saw nothing and when they looked back they saw Guha come to welcome them.

Guha was a little thin brown man, short, with soft brown eyes, with a beard of a few hairs and a pure white grin. He was painted and tattooed with red and blue lines and wore a short black bearskin skirt for his only clothes. He had on a necklace of tiger teeth and a belt of deer hooves laced on a thong, musical anklets of claws and pieces of ivory and black wood tied together, bone earrings, armbands of braided grass and bright spotted beans and stone beads cut with corners. In his curly hair were feathers, red and yellow and green and white and black. Hung from his belt were a magic rattle of bone rings and shells, a horn of honey, a bird noose of vine and a worn bamboo case that held tiny poisoned wooden darts. He was Rama's friend.

Guha ran to Rama, and Rama embraced him in a hug hard enough to crush a bear, and the savage King pounded Rama's back with friendly stunning blows, and laughed like a child.

"Oh Rama, Rama! Now you are an outcast like me!"

"You! You look more outlandish than I remembered you!" laughed Rama. Guha whistled and hunter-men came out of the trees bearing wooden trays of hot steaming food.

"Eat!" cried Guha. He threw himself on Lakshmana and thumped Sumantra. He smiled at Sita and spread down a blanket for her and his men put down the food and drink. "Princess," he said, "I know your mother well and I have known Rama since he was a boy."

"How glad I am to find a friend at last," said Sita. She smiled. "We meet you here!"

"That smile is all my payment," said Guha. "Queen, take food. Tell me what I can give you. Listen—demons fear me, men fear me, dear friends dare not come near me when I am out of sorts, and here on my own ground, in my own forest I can defeat any army ever created."

Sita said, "Oh Guha, we have had such a bad time!"

"Eat! Eat! Today is over. In Ayodhya men are driven raving mad by too many laws and rules. Freedom for me! I am a man of action, I heard what happened and never mind."

"How did you meet Rama before today?"

"A chase led me once to Ayodhya, and there I met Rama and Lakshmana, and though they were city boys I cared for their friendship. While they grew into men I met them again many times among the trees outside the city. I taught them forest lore and hunting. Lakshmana learned well." Guha smiled. "But Rama I could never teach to hunt."

Now the silent dark men of the greenwood came and made a fire under the great nut tree. They all sat around it and ate from banana leaves and drank from horns. There was meat and fish and sugar-bread, small sweet wild fruit and eggs and strong blossom-wines. Rama had fasted one night looking forward to happiness; he had fasted a second night looking back on a sad day. Now he ate thinking of nothing; he breathed in the clean air and the firelight lit up his face with golden light.

When they finished Guha put a necklace of pink seashells over Sita's head. "I adopt you into my people," he said. "You are in my family, for your heart is free."

Sita laid her head on Rama's shoulder. One of Guha's men said something in the whistling bird-language, and Rama carried her to the bed they had made for him. Sumantra relaxed and lay on his back looking up at all the stars of heaven through the trees; then he was asleep and Guha's people covered him with many thin blankets.

Guha lit up a fat cigar of sandalwood dust and nutmeg powder all rolled in long leaves and held together with goat butter. He leaned back against the tree and puffed smoke and looked at Lakshmana. Guha said, "Bows in hand we will watch over them through the dark night by Ganga. Oh child, we have made a soft bed for you also, lie down and rest. I am used to being awake at all hours but you deserve comfort."

Lakshmana closed his eyes and crunched a candied apple in his teeth. "King of the Wilderness, with Rama asleep on the ground and in misfortune what use would be my comfort?" He sighed. "I remember when you would come near to Ayodhya in happy days . . . ."

"Then I challenge you to a drinking contest," said Guha.

Lakshmana threw his bark back off his shoulder. "I accept." Lakshmana chose two horns and tried to make sure that each held the same amount. They seemed to, and he filled them with wine.

Guha carefully lined up five full wine jugs in a row and took one horn from Lakshmana. His men left more wood for the fire and retired into the shadows of the night as if into nowhere. "Prince, do not worry over the future," said Guha, "or try to outguess fortune, for it is hard enough to know what one is doing at the moment right now

After their initial flight, the exiles find their way into the forest and Rama instructs the charioteer to return to his father and tell him that they are well and will return after fourteen years.

Rama said, "Charioteer, do not be sad, for pain and pleasure must come in their turns to all men and mortal gods. Cheer my father. Guard him and keep him. He is very old, he must be protected from harm like a child. Tell him—*Lakshmana and Rama and Sita are well. They have no grief. After these fourteen short years you will soon see them return, and may that time quickly pass for you as if in sleep.*

Then as hermits do, Rama and Lakshmana matted their hair up over their heads with the sticky paste made from banyan bark. Guha gave both of them a deerskin, and to Sita he gave a fine feather cloak all of green and gold. Guha's men brought out from hiding a raft of logs with seats of fresh-broken leafy roseapple boughs, and took the three across Ganga. In mid-stream Sita made a silent prayer to the beautiful River Queen. "Ganga, protect my Rama. Beautiful bride of the Sea, let him return safely to his own Ayodhya. Let it be so, and I will bow to you. I will sing songs in the holy shrines along your river beaches . . . ."

Then they were all alone in the forest, far away from the smiling fields and gardens of men. There they felt the sadness of no one being near to care what happened to them. They walked in single file. First went Lakshmana holding his bow and carrying their fire and few possessions. Two quivers were on his back and he kept watch for animals and pitfalls and trod down the thorns and sharp grass. Sita followed him and Rama came last, looking down, his bow not even strung, just a few arrows tied carelessly at his belt and in his mind the mantras that could make those arrows countless.

They went still to the south, walking all day along the river Ganga. From inexperience of the forest they could not go fast nor get very far that day. They wasted their strength in many ways. When evening caught them Lakshmana shot a wild sow and cooked her, and they could eat very little.

The next morning was sunny. They followed an uneven trail and soon they could hear the meeting of the waters of Ganga and the Yamuna river rushing together. On the land between the rivers there was a clearing surrounded by deep green banyan trees with red fruit like heaps of emeralds mixed with rubies. Set in the clearing was a hermitage, the home of the saint Bharadwaja.

They entered and bowed to that old ascetic sitting on the grass, and Bharadwaja said, "I have heard. I see you after you have walked long. My place here is yours, stay close by me and I will care for you."

Bharadwaja, a great man, washed Rama's feet, and Rama said, "We cannot stay so close to Ayodhya, but tell us somewhere good to live."

Bharadwaja slaughtered a bull for their dinner. When they had eaten he said, "Go to the hill Chitrakuta ten ear-shots distant from here. Chitrakuta's peaks are clear and bright-colored. There deep rivers run, there live birds fair to view. From there many saints with hair white as skulls have gone to heaven, but now that hill is deserted by men."

In the morning Rama and Sita and Lakshmana crossed the Yamuna studded with islands. First going south a way, they then turned and went west along a little stream flowing toward them.

Two days later they reached Chitrakuta Hill, standing alone and towering above them, engarlanded by his own flowering woods thick with flowers of red and gold and blue and white and every color. He had crags and ridges, round stones and giant boulders. Through his stone ran veins of black and yellow and silver-colored ore. He was alive with singing birds. He was like the garden of the gods, like the Gandharva groves in the Himalya. Clear rivers and little streams flowed down from him like graceful braids; they ran over glittering sands and dashed their loud-laughing waves against blue rocks of lapis. The forest floor by Chitrakuta was wholly covered with flowers, the paths were overarched by joyful blossoms and by branches bending low with ripe fruit, and no man there to taste them.

It was all-colored spring in the forest. The bees hung their huge honeycombs on the high limbs. The forest trail where Rama walked seemed to be the eternal peaceful pathway of the saints. The fine trees up the steep-sloping hillsides above were a gathering of clouds, the wind played through them and they bowed and waved their leaves, catching gleams of the sun on them and smiling as clouds smile by their lightnings. The trees grew way up the hill; they crowned the heights.

The round chakravaka birds who cry plaintively in the night if separated bobbed on the water in the river ponds and swam in mated pairs. Ducks were afloat in the streams and herons stood among the waving lotus flowers near the banks. Blackbirds sang to the Sun. Timid deer grazed in meadows, and tigers and lions who had never seen men watched the newcomers through the leaves.

Sita, that beautiful young woman blameless and beloved, looked on the perfumed trees and shrubs never seen before. Rama told her their names, and Lakshmana brought her flower-shedding boughs and bushy branches of tender green and rosy leaves. They found a homesite on a tableland of rills, above a gentle rise on Chitrakuta, overlooking the level plain below.

Near a cave, by a clear sweet mountain spring Lakshmana built on pillars a strong house framed with long bamboos and floored with grass, whose walls were of woven wood tightly lashed by cords to keep out wind, whose roof was leaves. It had one door and many rooms and fair windows, and seeing it Rama said, "Surely we shall live here. How did you learn to build so well and do all this for us?"

As soon as he finished the house Lakshmana killed a black deer and dressed it and threw it into a fire. When it was hot and well-done Rama took the meat and set it out along with grass and water for an offering to the hill spirits. Then a household god came to live in their home filling it with gladness and warding away wrong. Only then did Rama and Sita enter the house.

Having like Rama gone a long way, the glorious Sun was sloping down and ready to depart from the sky. The light-giving Lord of the Day carried away with him all Rama's red-dyed grief at leaving Fair Ayodhya. The loving embrace of blue evening made even the Sun renounce heaven and leave the sky.

It was twilight and the trees stood motionless. From all sides came the enveloping dark veils of our Lady Night, forgetful and restful. Rama and Sita beside him were asleep in their house, they had no farther to go. The sky slowly turned above with stars for her bright open eyes, and the splendid mild-beaming Moon rose to dispel the darkness and touch all hearts with his glad rays, and Lakshmana watched the midnight gradually pass away.

The group wander for fourteen years in the wilderness, aided by kindly wood spirits. Finally they come to the Dandaka Forest, home of the Rakshasa demons.This is, a huge wasteland whose king is Ravana.

dandaka forest

It was almost the fourteenth summer when Rama and Sita and Lakshmana crossed over the Vindhya Hills and began to walk down the southern slopes. One evening after walking far they entered a large grove of trees, and many clear streams crossed the path with their branches of water. There was woodsmoke on the air, and Rama said, "We are coming to the home of Agastya, the brahmana who lowered the Vindhya Hills, destroyed two demons and settled here."

Sita asked, "How did he do that?"

Rama answered, "Agastya is a small man, but what is impossible for even the gods he can do easily."

Agastya said, "Rama of the war-chariots, take from me this sweet-sounding bow in exchange for your old one, and take this arrow. One day I found these things in the forest. I think they have fallen from heaven, perhaps during the confusion of Ravana's attack many years ago. This bow will better bear the weight of those weapons Viswamitra taught you. The blades of these arrows have never needed to be polished or sharpened, and so I think they may be infallible, shot by the right person . . . ."

The evening deepened into night and Lakshmana made a fire. Agastya said, "Rama, round my home on every side all the waters are clear. Live here with me. Harmless deer haunt this forest, bewitching people by their beauty. Aside from that, there is no menace here."

Rama, said, "Lakshmana would hunt those trusting deer for us to eat. That would pain you, we cannot stay."

In the morning Agastya led Rama out onto a spur of the mountains, high on the hillside looking south. Below them the Vindhya Hills ended and the thirsty dry jungles of Dandaka Forest reached out to the south as far as they could see over the land.

"We are far from Lanka," said Agastya, "but the edge of Dandaka is the frontier of the Rakshasa kingdom on Earth. For the most part Dandaka is a huge wasteland. It knows no master but Ravana. Whoever goes down there must be himself his own protection. Oh Rama, Ravana the Demon King believes he owns the universe; what are men to him? Pleasures distract him and he scorns men as but his food, weak and worthless. Men live surrounded by chance and danger and they cannot tell right from wrong. Their lives are short and miserable. They are prey to hunger and thirst, disease and old age. Unending evils overwhelm them. Behold Man, ignorant of his own ways in the world—now merrily drinking and dancing, now blindly weeping all in tears.

"Fourteen thousand Rakshasa veterans garrison Dandaka, commanded by the demon general Khara. Away to the south they have an army station in a thistle grove, and watchtowers of stone around it. And in the jungle Gandharva sentinels sent by the gods watch in the trees. Serpents arch and bend up from underground holes, guards for the Water Lord Varuna. And whirling and sparkling in the night are the Yakshas, placed as sentries by the Treasure King Vaishravana. Every god fears that Ravana may yet move farther against him, and send demons to enforce his evil empire."

Rama said, "I did not know that there was anywhere on this Earth that Rama and Lakshmana could not freely go."

Agastya said, "Strike back at him."

Rama smiled. "I still have a year to wander." He turned and looked behind him at Agastya's hermitage. That grove of trees and little house could remove any weariness of body or heart. No Rakshasa could enter there.

Agastya said, "There are still a few pleasant spots here and there in Dandaka, but for the rest it is infested by blood-drinking demons. Be careful, especially at night. Don't let the Rakshasas surprise you and they will not win. If you meet them, prevent them as you go." Agastya embraced Rama. "That is the path. I use it sometimes, for a little way, to gather sticks. Rama, demons do not love men, therefore men must love each other."

Rama and Sita and Lakshmana, with their one new bow and two new arrows given by Agastya and with their arrows from Ayodhya, went downhill into Dandaka. The morning Sun, like a man newly rich, shone too proud over the forest. They left behind Vindhya of a thousand summits with his caves of lions and falling fountains, and his crystal rivers laughing aloud as they flowed down his sides.

The trees of Dandaka were like columns of wood and their branches were twisted like the crooked hearts of evil men. Their leaves were brittle and dry. The air was wavy and hot; there was a hot wind, and huge hot boulders threw back the heat, and curled shreds of bark fallen to the forest floor rustled as the Sun got hotter.

All Dandaka was creaking in the heat, warning away men. The ground was uneven, trackless and deserted, overgrown with hard red burr-bushes and brush that cried out underfoot. Every pond that Rama and Lakshmana and Sita saw was encircled with wavy lines and blackened grasses that showed how the water had receded. The wind blew in gusts and they heard screams from the lines of dead whistling canes bent down in the wind. Dandaka stretched before them, fearsome and wild and wide.

Past stumps and trunks Lakshmana led them on into that hair-raising wilderness, and Dandaka grew deeper and denser and filled with noisy chiming crickets, and vultures sat on bare branches. Then at noon they saw the eighty-four thousand little Valakhilya saints of the wood. They were people smaller than a thumbnail, floating in the air, drinking in sunbeams, looking like motes of dust in the Sun.

They spoke to Rama and said, "Oh child, we are meek and unassuming. Here it is dreadful and lonely. It is a sadness to live here. Rakshasas prowl for flesh by night. They overshadow the darkness as though they would crush the mountains down. We must endure demons and submit to them. We have seen mountains of bones from the victims they have slaughtered, white bones, Rama, white bones . . . ."

Rama said, "Let me just walk on, through this forest. Give me your permission to see who will stop me."

"We see your strength," said the Valakhilyas. "Free this ancient forest, deliver us from the Night-Wanderers."

Rama answered the little saints. "I have strayed from the Dharma of warriors if this has happened while I was near you."

The Valas said, "We hide from Rakshasas of Lanka walking abroad through Dandaka, in form like hideous charred corpses from some cremation ground. They'll rush at you, Rama. They will hit you from behind with unfair weapons."

Lakshmana said, "If they attack us by day or by night we will hunt them down and kill them all."

The Valas said, "Oh Lakshmana and Rama like the Moon, they cannot bear you. More than anyone they will resent you; go on your way and be on your guard." The Valakhilyas clustered in the air. "Oh Rama, we are peaceful. We don't know . . . we think . . . we think war is better than fear, if you will fight it for us . . . ."

Rama and Sita and Lakshmana left the Valakhilyas and went along south for awhile, and Sita said, "We are not forest people. Do not carry war with you; in Ayodhya once again become a warrior. Don't let desire make you do wrong, do not kill demons without cause for war. I have heard that Lord Indra, when he envies the merit won by an ascetic, will take on the guise of a warrior, and go into the forest, and leave his fine sword with the hermit for safekeeping, and go away. So the ascetic will keep by him a sword sharpened only to kill men. Then he will begin to carry it with him when going from home. Then he will one day draw it. He will kill."

Rama said, "I won't start any war."

"How can you tell?" asked Sita. "Discard Agastya's arrows. After all these years we do not need them to hunt our food, and they are meant only for killing demons. Do not carry war with you, or by small degrees your mind will alter."

Rama said, "Princess, war is within us, it's nothing outside. No warrior neglects his weapons. He never gives them up. It is a shame to me that those saints must seek my protection that should be theirs without asking. Sita, while he may a warrior like other men enjoys peace, but misfortune and peril make him flame up in anger and resist."

"How can you tell what is right?" asked Sita. "You are only doing what you like."

Rama said, "Dharma leads to happiness, but happiness cannot lead to Dharma. There is some reason for all this. The Valakhilyas have great power, yet they have done nothing against Ravana. The Demon King must surely have some strong defense that can't be broken by their merit, or they could all by themselves easily destroy all Khara's soldiers and suffer no loss doing it."

Rama has an encounter with Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana, who wants him for her husband. Unlike Odysseus who succumbs to temptation, Rama refuses and she flees to her brother and goads him into kidnapping Sita whom he desires for her beauty.

Rama and Sita and Lakshmana kept going south through Dandaka Forest and reached the Godavari River. Lakshmana built them another house, near the river in a place called Panchavati where five whispering trees banked the stream, not far from a hillside cave.

One morning soon after they arrived they were all sitting out in the open by the house. Rama was telling some story to Sita and Lakshmana, when out from the forest surrounding them came the Rakshasi Surpanakha. She was Ravana's sister.

She saw Rama and desired him. Surpanakha was misshapen and mean. Her yellowy skin was rutted like a bad road. She had a pot belly and ears like flat baskets, claws on her fingers and toes, squinty eyes and messy hair.

She was gnawing a raw bone but she threw it away and leered at Rama. She pointed at Sita and said, "My dear, why keep that skinny girl?"

Rama stood up and said, "I am Rama."

"And I am Surpanakha! I have chosen you for my husband."

Lakshmana said, "A great gain."

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Surpanakha said, "I'll take you to the broad city of Lanka by magic, dear Rama. My brother's wealth will let us live like a King and Queen."

Rama smiled at her. "You see—I am already married. To a proud woman like yourself, a co-wife is misery. Don't think more about it."

Surpanakha looked at Lakshmana. Lakshmana quickly said, "Don't take second best."

"Why make shy excuses?" Surpanakha cracked her knuckles. "It's natural to marry."

"Bless you, maiden," said Lakshmana, "but leave us alone. May all creatures be happy. A good wife is hard to find, may you soon be wed."

Rama said, "My brother Lakshmana is also married."

Surpanakha cried, "I see the trouble!" She rushed at Sita, and held out before her her claws curved like elephant hooks. But Lakshmana caught her. He took the gold-handled knife. from his belt, and swiftly cut off Surpanakha's ears and threw her down. "Were you not a woman you'd be dead!"

Surpanakha ran away bleeding and fled to the Rakshasa garrison commanded by General Khara. She flung up her arms and fell at Khara's feet like a stone falling from the blue sky.

Khara caught his breath in boundless wrath. In a voice deep and low as thunderclouds he said, "*Arise!*" The Earth trembled as he spoke. Landslides fell down from the hills around the Rakshasa camp.

"I've been attacked!"

"Don't roll on the ground! Who did it?"

"Two men and a woman. As if I had no protection!"

"Sound the alarm!" A Rakshasa soldier smashed a big hanging brass plate with a metal mace and kept on smashing it for a hundred and eight times. Khara yelled at Surpanakha, "Where are they?"

She yelled back, "Panchavati!"

The alarm stopped and the Rakshasa garrison assembled, fourteen thousand strong. Khara stood before them and said, "Like Death, let us kill the three humans at Panchavati and please this lady!"

In Panchavati, Rama's Ayodhya arrows started to smoke. His new bow hummed. Rama strung it and said, "Lakshmana, we have sharply angered them! For a moment hide with Sita in that cave, and cover the mouth with trees."

Rama stood alone, glancing up into the sky, in the direction Surpanakha had gone. His green hand drew back his bow. His lips shook with anger and his eyes were red with blood.

The Rakshasas came, flying low just above the trees and led by Khara. When they saw just one man facing them they hesitated. Rama called out. "Stop! If you value your lives!"

Khara replied, "Surrender yourself then."

Rama said, "I live here quietly. Why seek to injure me?"

"You are destroyed!" answered the demons. Rama spoke a mantra and he took three steps backwards to get his aim. Khara looked around, saw no one else but Rama, and waved his arm. The Invincible Legion of Dandaka attacked.

Rama killed them all, fourteen thousand Rakshasa warriors and General Khara. He used what he needed of the mantras and weapons Viswamitra had taught him. Rama's golden arrows swept the sky like yellow lightnings. There was no escape.

Surpanakha was watching at a safe distance. She dove into the Earth and flew by Rakshasa power through the solid stone, right under the southern ocean. She surfaced in Lanka just outside Ravana's palace and ran inside to her brother.

Ravana was on his throne holding court. Surpanakha came in wailing—*Rama! Rama! Rama!*

She ran up the stairs to the throne and grabbed Ravana's legs in a grip like an iron vise. Her ears were gone. The court of the Demon King fell silent from shock and Ravana rose and cried—*Who dares?*

Surpanakha said, "Khara is dead."

"What?" cried Ravana.

"And all his soldiers."

Ravana beckoned with his ten left hands and Rakshasa physicians hurried forward. They snapped their fingers and restored Surpanakha's ears and gave her something to drink, and let her see herself in an unbreakable mirror. Ravana had her sit down and came down from the throne to sit beside her and said, "Now tell me."

"I am the only one still alive," said Surpanakha. "Like Hell itself, Dandaka is bathed in blood. In half a moment Rama killed Khara and his legion with whistling screaming arrows of dazzling gold, and the harmless men that we have killed for food in the woods watched from heaven as your army died. The kindly saints and hermits now may mock you and walk safely through dreadful Dandaka."

Ravana cleared his ten throats. All his eyes were looking all around. They danced in his heads like fiery coals. "Who did it?"

"Rama!"

"Who is Rama?"

"A prince."

A man? Ravana looked closely at his sister. "How many millions were in his army?"

"He had no army."

"What gods helped him?"

"No gods. Rama fought alone, and I take your protection for bringing bad news."

"Bad news? Why . . . a man? He's drunk poison. He's poked his finger in a black snake's eye! He is pulling lions' teeth inside a burning house!"

"The Wanderers of the Wood are dead and broken on the Earth," said Surpanakha. "Rama looks like a hermit, but it is only to destroy you that he has come."

"Me?" Ravana looked tenderly into his sister's face. "If they did me wrong, I would kill that tyrant Death, I would burn Fire and smother the Wind. Have no fear."

Surpanakha said, "Brother, you're a disgrace. You're all muscle and brawn, you rule by brute force and ignorance! Here you are lost in pleasure, idle and greedy and useless. You're not going to do anything, are you?"

"Enough!" roared Ravana. "By all the demons, Surpanakha, the Earth is wide and who cares what mere men do on every bit of her? Dandaka is a worse wasteland than the back of the Moon. There's nothing worth having there anyway."

"You don't know Rama," said Surpanakha, "but you are merciful. You will let the best bowman in the world live on your land with his brother and his fair wife Sita."

"Sita?"

"Whomever she warmly embraces will outgain the gods in happiness. It was Rama's brother who cut off my ears, but when Khara tried to avenge me only Rama fought us. The three of them can't do much harm there. At this very moment Sita must be holding Rama lovingly, and healing his wound by her caress."

"Then he was wounded!" said Ravana.

"He hurt his heel as he backed away barefoot."

"Then he retreated!"

"He was aiming, to shoot down your army."

"Go on, tell me about her."

"She is more beautiful than any of your wives, but all she thinks of is Rama."

"Indeed?"

The Demon King dismissed his court and retired alone to his rooms. Surpanakha left Lanka and went to the Asura underworlds beneath the sea, and there she married.

Early the next morning Ravana went alone to his stables, armed with a bow and arrows and a sharp sword. He got in a small gold chariot that was pulled by asses with the faces of fiends. The chariot rose into the air and Ravana flew north, across the vast ocean and then across our continent to Gokarna. There in a hermitage lived his uncle Maricha, whom Rama had shot as a boy but had not killed. Ravana's twenty hands rested on the chariot rail. From the center of the rail hung ten ornamental golden arrows tied together with golden string. They were Ravana's only sign of Empire and Conquest: ten arrows for the ten directions; South and the other three, and the four in between those four, and up and down, all was Ravana's.

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the Golden deer

Sita of great beauty,
You are a woman.
To a woman everything is becoming,
Every one is her own,
May I be yours.

Maricha the Rakshasa sat alone in a clearing, clad in black deerskin. Ravana's chariot came soaring down and landed, and the Demon King walked over to his uncle. Ravana sat beside Maricha and said, "How good to see you, my old friend."

"Why are you here?" asked Maricha.

Ravana said, "The Dandaka demons have all been killed by—"

"*Stop!*" Maricha looked around. "Ravana, if you wish me to live, do not speak that name in my hearing! Fear of him has made me a hermit."

"Then you know about it," said Ravana.

"I saw Khara's legion die by magic sight."

"Magic," said Ravana. "That's what I want to talk to you about."

"*Ow!*" Maricha rubbed his knee and looked painfully at Ravana.

"What's wrong?" asked Ravana.

"Go away! Don't bother me. This talk pains me."

"You're making that up, Uncle!"

"He did not at first strike to kill me," said Maricha. "And now forever will I see him, wherever I look, dressed like the trees in bark, watching me where he cannot be."

person. I won't escape him but I will lead him away and let him kill me." Maricha stood up. "I will go if you will promise not to brag to me along the way."

"Of course, anything you say." Ravana started to get up.

"Just one moment," said Maricha. He sadly tidied up his few old possessions and quickly performed his own funeral.

Then they were on Ravana's chariot, going through the sky to Panchavati. Maricha drew in the fresh air in deep breaths and stretched his arms and legs.

"There's always just a chance," said Maricha.

Ravana said, "That man isn't worth a finger-flick."

Ravana landed the chariot some distance from Rama's house. Ravana crept up close to the house, leading Maricha by the hand. Ravana said, "There they are."

Maricha became a deer. His face was of living blue sapphire like a moving mask made of a blue mirror. His antlers were ivory tipped with moonstone points and his hooves were glassy black flint. His lighted eyes were violet amethyst. His golden hair grew this way and that, and there were silver spots

on his sides, and when he danced like a deer the golden hair ran the light in rays over his body. His underbelly was pale pink and his tongue bright red. He held his tail straight up and arched his neck a little and ran off.

The other deer scented a Rakshasa and fled from Maricha as he approached Rama's house. The tigers drew back and did not dare to roar. Maricha ate grass in a green meadow by the Godavari river, then ran past Rama's house, then stopped and turned, and lay down nibbling leaves.

Rama and Sita and Lakshmana were all at home, and Sita saw the deer. She called, "Rama, come quickly. Can you catch him?"

Rama said, "How beautiful."

Lakshmana came up and said, "There is no such deer on Earth. That is an illusion."

Rama strung his bow and took one arrow. "Wait here with Sita. I'll try to get him alive, or else I'll shoot him."

Lakshmana said, "See how his shape seems to shift and change around the edges."

"I'll be careful," said Rama. "If that is a Rakshasa illusion I will destroy it."

Maricha got up. He started to walk right for Rama. Then he noticed a man there. He backed and jumped and walked away into the trees just out of bowshot. He stopped and turned and gazed at Rama with his ears out.

Then Maricha went away running and jumping, taking long leaps with his forefeet drawn up to his chest and his back legs straight out. Rama went after him. Maricha didn't seem to see Rama pursuing him and so Rama didn't shoot him for a long time, hoping to follow the deer home and capture him alive later. But though Maricha now and then seemed to tire, or sometimes lose his way, he tempted Rama farther and farther from home, and Rama began to lose sight of him.

The golden deer reappeared and Rama saw him through the stark trees of Dandaka, and decided to kill him. Rama shot a gold arrow and hit the lovely deer through his heart. Maricha leapt up high as a palm tree, then fell on his back, and at the point of death resumed his true form.

A black demon lay there dying. Rama ran up holding his diamond and rainbow bow. With his last breath Maricha shouted in Rama's voice—*Help me!* He threw back his head and died.

Maricha's cry was much louder than any man could shout. Rama knew they would hear it at Panchavati, and could not hear him from where he stood. Every hair on Rama's body was on end. He made sure Maricha was dead and ran for home as fast as he could.

Sita heard Rama's voice cry help and said, "Lakshmana, he is hurt!"

"That is not truly his voice," said Lakshmana.

"How much has Bharata paid you to betray us?"

"He is not in danger," said Lakshmana. "He told me to wait and stay with you. That deer was a demon, don't you understand?"

Sita wept. "Would you let him die? Oh, you don't care, you don't care!" She looked wildly around then started to go after Rama herself. Lakshmana held her back. She pleaded, "Let me go . . . Rama . . . ."

Lakshmana held her and looked her right in the eye. He sighed and frowned. She was breathing fast, she said, "Then is it me you want? Take me but save Rama!"

Lakshmana covered his ears. Real anger was on his face. He saw red. Red Sita, red trees, red sky. "First you have sent Rama away to fetch you an illusion," he said. "And now you order me to obey a false voice. Do not move!"

Lakshmana looked out into the forest. He said, "Wrong words are nothing new for a woman." He drew a circle around Sita on the ground, with the tip of his bow.

"Do not step out of this circle and do not cross this line," said Lakshmana. "Let these trees witness that I have done right!"

Sita was paying no attention. Lakshmana thrust out his lower lip in anger. He took his quiver and entered the edge of the forest, bent low a bit, went under a branch and was out of sight.

The Rakshasa King Ravana watched him go. Then Ravana came boldly across the clearing toward Rama's house covered with the disguise of an old holy man, like a treacherous deep well covered and hidden by tall grass. Sita saw him coming and dried her eyes.

Ravana looked like a man. He wore soft red silk. There was one lock of white hair left long on his shaven head. He held a parasol and wore sandals, and he carried resting over his left shoulder a long triple bamboo staff with a waterjar slung on it. Ravana came and stood silently by Sita's house, as holy men do when begging their daily food. There was no sign of Lakshmana or Rama. All around them there was only the

Sita's stepped over Lakshmana's line and said, "Worshipful brahmana, be our guest. Sit, take some water, wash and I will bring food."

Ravana hummed—*I walk the sweet Earth, Lord; I see you have made beautiful creatures, Lord; how fine and true, Oh Lord of Love.*

He spoke very fair. "How do you come to live here alone, my girl, in perilous Dandaka land?" He stood looking at her. "By the Book, fair are your jewels."

"I am Sita. These jewels were presents. Don't fear demons, for my husband Rama will be back soon."

"Ah," said Ravana, "his name can't be Rama, he must be Kama! You are Rati the wife of Love, wantonly hiding in the forest." He smiled like a father. "Oh, you timid girl, of slender waist and tapering thighs! You've had a lovers' quarrel with Kama. You belong in a palace. I can see you like jewels and luxury!"

"Brahmana, sit down and what can I give you? I am Sita, a mortal woman and my husband is the Ayodhya King. These jewels were gifts from Anasuya and this necklace came from Guha. Tell me your name and family."

"Beautiful," said Ravana. "I am the Rakshasa King Ravana. I rule the universe. Come to me, Sita. I will take you to Lanka with her engines and weapons, and I will put you over all my other Queens."

"Never." Sita looked again at the quiet forest and could see no one.

Woman, I am Ravana feared by the Gods! Ravana clapped his hands and his disguise fell away. He was tall as a tree. He had ten dark faces and twenty dark arms, and twenty red eyes red-rimmed like fire. He had yellow up-pointing fangs. He licked his lips with sharp tongues. He wore golden armor, long heavy gold earrings swaying, gold bracelets, gold arm-bands, ten golden crowns set with golden pearls, gold belt-chains crashing and gold rings all over his fingers. Fragrant white flower-garlands went over his shoulders and around his ten necks.

Ravana shook his heads and rattled his crowns and looked down at Sita. Seeing that evil one revealed, the leaves did not flutter. The trees of Dandaka did not move. No breath of wind dared stir about in the woods. The fast-streaming Godavari river slackened her speed from fright. The glorious Sun, who every day looks down upon our world, this time dimmed his light from the sadness of what he saw.

"I will have you!" said Ravana. "Princess Sita, you are half divine, why mingle more with men? Rule every world with me. Sita, I stand in space and I pick up Earth in my hand. I close the Moon within my fingers and put the Sun in my pocket, and arrest the aimless planets. You will forget Rama with me!"

Ravana bent down, a black mountain come to life. Sita knelt near his feet hiding her face, clinging to a tree. Sita wore a clear yellow robe and Anasuya's ornaments and Guha's necklace. Her skin was golden, she was like sunlight in among the trees, and Ravana reached for her. In one left hand he held

her long dark hair. He caught her legs in two of his right arms and lifted her, and his demon chariot came to meet him through the air.

Sita cried—*Rama! Rama!* many times and struggled to get free but it was useless.

Sita reached down her hands and broke the anklets off from her legs and let them fall down on that plain-looking hill. She took off her earrings and dropped them. Sita let all the ornaments of Anasuya fall, and she tied Guha's necklace in her yellow scarf edged with gold and dropped it also. Ravana did not notice. He sped away, and Sita's hair streamed out on the wind, and they left behind the two monkeys.

The two monkeys watched with their yellow-brown eyes never blinking, while Sita's gold and silver bells and bracelets fell ringing down and crying. The yellow scarf flashed down like lightning; the silver ornaments were the Moon and white stars dropping.

The famous abduction is carried out while Rama is off hunting a golden deer which is really a disguised demon relative of Ravana. When Rama discovers what has happened, he and Lakshmana vow to find Sita.

hanuman!

Ravana looked at Sita and he thought—*Mine*. He brought her to the back of his palace in the city of Lanka. Ravana smiled at her. His faces were all smiles and he said, "You will not see Rama again. Here you are safe, you have no more husband, and so there can be nothing wrong in our love."

"To Hell with you," said Sita. "You took me like a thief. And barely made it past an old vulture—."

"Quiet!" Ravana screamed at her. Then at once he composed himself. "My dear . . . capture is a good way to get a wife . . . I want your love. I will wait for you to love me."

"Do what you will with me," said Sita, "I will feel nothing."

"When you get to know me, perhaps . . . we shall see, my dear. Come inside with me now, change your clothes and eat and rest."

"I won't enter your kennel."

"Damn you! Hey, Rakshasis!" Female Rakshasas ran up. "Take her and imprison her in the grove of tall Asoka trees back behind my room and guard her day and night."

A demoness took each of Sita's arms and led her away to the Asoka grove. Ravana told the rest of the Rakshasis, "Use hard words and soft, threats and gifts and temptations. Break her to my will and give her at any time whatever she may ask for."

Then the Demon King called after Sita, "When winter begins and the Sun turns north, if you haven't come into my bed I'll eat you minced for breakfast!" He went in the building.

In his high heaven Lord Brahma summoned Indra and said, "Sita must not die nor end her life in Lanka."

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Indra asked, "Why me?"

Brahma looked at him. Indra said, "I'll see to it, Sir."

Lord Indra waited until night. Then taking the Goddess Sleep for his companion he approached Lanka carrying a bowl of heavenly wheat and butter.

Sleep spread out her arms over Lanka. *For the good of the gods. For the downfall of the Night Demons.*

The Rakshasis guarding Sita fell asleep. Indra entered the scarlet Asoka grove and touched Sita lightly so she awoke. She was not afraid.

"I am Indra, the Lord of Heaven, good fortune to you. My Lady, the demons sleep. I bring you food. Eat this and never will you hunger nor thirst for a year."

"How do I know who you are?" asked Sita.

"I am Indra, and you know me."

Sita took a little wheat and dropped it to Earth. "Whether Rama lives or has died let this nourish him." Then she ate.

Indra said, "Don't fear Ravana. He cannot force you, for he is under a strong curse, and he'll die if he does."

"Who cursed him?" asked Sita.

"While Evil lies borne down by Sleep I will tell you what happened," said Indra. "Anyone who desires an unwilling woman burns himself, and he who loves a willing one will find delight."

Sita smiled at Indra. The food he had brought her had taken away her rising hunger and sorrow. The Lord of the Gods touched his hands, knelt before Sita, and returned to heaven, taking the Goddess Sleep with him.

In Dandaka Forest, Rama running for home met Lakshmana running towards him and shouted—*Go back!*

They ran home together. They found their house empty and looked everywhere for Sita. Rama asked the river Godavari, "Where is Sita?" But although Sita had told the river to speak to Rama, Godavari did not dare answer, remembering still the terrible form of Ravana.

Rama spoke to the trees, "Show me my Sita slender as a bough." He saw a glimpse of yellow and ran toward it. But it was a cluster of yellow flowers and not Sita's dress. Rama looked all around. He called, "I see you there! Come on out, I can see you!"

Lakshmana carefully examined all around their home. He went where Sita would go to bathe, or to draw water, or to pick flowers. He found the forest gods were gone. Wildflowers were faded, and the Earth herself looked worn and very old. He found a huge footprint. The highest branches of many trees were broken. Some deer came, and looked at Lakshmana, then jumped and ran south looking up at the sky, and back at the house, and at the Earth, and they were making little sounds.

Lakshmana went to Rama and said, "She was taken in an aerial car to some place on Earth south from here."

Lakshmana gathered their possessions, took the weapons and left the rest, and led Rama south by the hand. Lakshmana

kept down his eyes, and soon he knelt. "Rama, a strange white flower lies here fallen, holding a drop of blood, still threaded with silk from a garland."

Slowly they continued on. First Lakshmana found broken bits of ivory inset with pearls. Then he discovered a sharp torn piece of gold armor; then a belt; then a sharp bladeless iron arrow, feathered with iron, eight paces long and stout as a mace; a long quiver packed full of such arrows, the whole thing crushed and all the arrows broken inside; then a huge vulture wing-feather crushing to death beneath it two asses who wore the faces of demons; an axle standing on end; yokes and tresses hanging in the trees; the wreckage of a war-chariot overturned from the sky and fallen in many pieces; the ground bloodsoaked and raked with hooves and claws and marks not human.

Then Lakshmana found ten great bleeding dark arms torn off at the shoulders. Rama looked at all this and said, "Here the Rakshasas fought each other over Sita, and they tore her apart and this is her blood all over. They pulled her head off . . . ."

Lakshmana said, "These are all left arms. The hands wear costly gold rings. They are marked on their palms by the royal birth-wheels of an Emperor."

"What does that mean?" asked Rama.

"The Rakshasa King himself was here—look there!"

They saw Jatayu. The Vulture King lay on his back, barely alive. Lakshmana and Rama ran to him, and slowly Jatayu said, "Lord Rama, it was my age . . . my old age alone kept me from killing Ravana to save your wife!"

Rama said, "The plain truth is that there is no end to my bad fortune. You have given away your life for me, and despite that my life herself has been taken from me, and they killed her . . . ."

"She is alive. Sita lives!" Jatayu coughed. "But not without cost did Ravana go past me, strong though he was, well-armored and on a sky-chariot—." Blood ran from Jatayu's beak and he died.

Rama and Lakshmana went south, and all the happiness and life had been worn out of the land they walked on. That was the ground beneath the flight-paths used by the Rakshasas going between Lanka and the garrison that had been north in Dandaka. The Rakshasas had ruined it by flying overhead.

At this point, Hanuman enters and promises to help. He, his brother who is a king, and the king of the bears become involved. Hanuman goes to Lanka and causes considerable damage, then returns to bring Rama and an army of thousands of monkeys and bears for a bloody battle.

SITA'S RESCUE

Rama and Lakshmana were climbing when a poor woodcutter appeared from the woods. He bowed and smiled at them. He put down his bundle of sticks and sat on it.

"What whim has led the Sun and Moon to visit me here?" The woodcutter wiped his hands. He smiled and nodded his head. "Are you truly gods walking on foot through the world? Oh, you two, you look at me like lions, my boys!"

Rama smiled. He looked around the hill, as though he had stepped fresh from the world's beginning to look around and see what had been done. He looked at the woodcutter. "Oh Hanuman of golden earrings."

"Rama, I remember you now." Hanuman shook himself. There he was, white with glossy fur, a long tail curved gracefully, long thin arms, feet like hands, a red face and white teeth and light eyes almost all yellow. "Why do you want Hanuman?"

"Ravana took Sita."

"We looked long after her," said Hanuman. He grew bigger. "Get on my shoulders," he said, and took them on uphill to meet Sugriva.

Sugriva had gold fur, and his throat looked like a piece of shiny gold. Rama embraced Sugriva. There was a small fire and Rama and Sugriva walked around it for a pledge of friendship, and each of them promised to take the other's joy and sorrow as his own.

Then Sugriva and Rama and Hanuman and Lakshmana sat down, and Sugriva the Monkey King said, "See what fell on our hill." He brought out Sita's scarf, untied it, and all Sita's ornaments were there. "A young goddess whose eyes curved back round to her ears was carried away by Ravana."

Rama asked, "Are these hers, Lakshmana?"

"Yes."

Sugriva said, "I know every place beneath the Sun's many rays."

Hanuman said, "Wherever he took her we can find her. Yet we have to hide on this hill, and Sugriva must suffer for the separation from his wife."

Rama said, "Let this meeting be the turning point of your fortune."

Lakshmana said, "Truly, a friend is protection against injury and a help for sorrow."

Hanuman smiled. "We'll keep these till we may give them back to Sita."

Rama opened his quiver. He took out a war arrow. The arrow was gold plated, thicker than a finger, half as long as a staff, marked with Rama's name and vaned with the feathers of the fastest birds and steel tipped.

Rama strung his bow and said, "It is wrong for people in love to be separated!" He shot and his arrow went through seven old ironwood trees stout as turrets.

Hanuman joined his hands. "Rama, we'll come back soon. Lanka is hard to reach and far away, but I know every province and city and puddle and footprint and demon stronghold in the world. When Vali would chase me and Sugriva we would fly so high that we saw below us all the world like a picture, clear as your face in a mirror. We saw Earth herself turning in space with a strange whirring noise like a firebrand swept quickly through the air. She was like a wheel, and her cities were like small golden coins and her rivers were crossing like threads. Her forests and meadows were tiny patches; the Vindhya and Himalya Hills all covered with rocks looked like elephants in a pond as they rose from the flat Earth."

Jambavan the bear smiled. "Sugriva trusts this Hanuman, and Hanuman relies with even more confidence on himself, and I will also accompany him."

Rama gave Hanuman a wide gold ring. "This is mine and she will know it, for her father Janaka gave it to me after our wedding, and on it is written my name three times—*Rama, Rama, Rama!*"

So with only one thought in their minds, the monkeys and bears fanned out from Kishkindhya into the four quarters of the world. They gave orders and ignored them, passed impassable torrents and climbed unclimbable crags, sifted the sands of the deserts and combed the meadows. They drove the yellow tigers yowling from the glens and the butterflies flapping from the gardens and the village cats running from the fields so that they all fled together. The monkeys and bears rushed along and shouted in high voices and low—*Step Aside! Move over! Let me by, it won't take me long!*

The animals of Kishkindhya ran up along the narrow ways that lead from certain holy temples to the hidden side-doors of heaven. They looked into sealed royal vaults and pawed through secret treasure-rooms forgotten from the past. Disguised as men, they bumped into people and picked their pockets; posing as bandits they shook out the tents of travelers as if they were cleaning rugs, and rattled the caravan wagons like dice to see what would fall out from them.

The monkeys and bears asked the birds a thousand searching questions. They peeked inside closed flowers, talked to the wild beasts and spoke to the tame buffalo. They listened to leopards in the quiet jungle and to men in the city bazaars. They followed streams to their sources in the hills to be sure they were not the water from Sita's tears. And at night they slept on the ground under fruit trees, making their beds beneath their breakfast.

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The green hills of Lanka Island rose from the horizon. Hanuman saw the shoreline of warm white sand and scattered stones and water pools, and behind that many tall swaying palms, and plane trees, and forests of aloes. He saw rivers meet the sea, and saw where pearls and cowrie shells and fine corals had been spread to dry. He flew inland, over stacks of gold and silver from the demon mines that lay blazing in the sunlight, and then he saw the City.

Beautiful Lanka was built on a level place just below the highest summit of the three-peaked hill Trikuta, as though built on clouds. She had four gates facing in the four directions and her strong golden walls were the color of sunshine. Preceded by a little breeze, Hanuman landed under an overhanging cliff on the hill not far below the city, amid fruit trees in full flower and bearing fruit as well, in a soft scene like heaven. Blue rivers laughing with flowers fell running down channels and stairs of ruby, and trees of every color growing uphill reached out to catch the faint pink clouds. The warm sea-wind smelled like pepper and cloves and fragrant spices.

Hanuman ate some dates and thought, "Not a hair out of place, I'm ready to do it again! I call that little ocean a puddle . . . not like other people . . . I'm better than any bird . . . ."

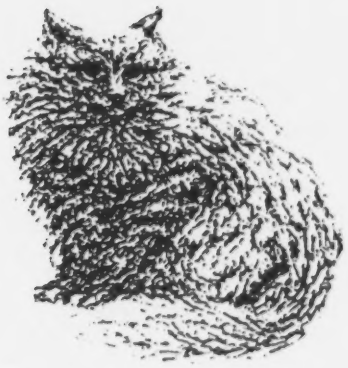
Carefully Hanuman crept out from hiding, just enough to see the main highway to Lanka's north wall. Around the walls ran a deep moat fed by a mountain river, shark-filled, running in a bed of iron and wearing pale floating lotuses and lilies. The tall red-golden gateway panels were painted with green plants and twining vines, with fish and trees and flowers, flights of birds and clouds and stars. Elephants stood under the stone gate arch, and Rakshasa bowmen looked out from the crowning roofs and turrets. Seen from below, Lanka was a lofty city moving in the sky and built on air, embraced by clouds and held by sunbeams.

"We'll have to kill them all," thought Hanuman. "We can't be friends, they are too proud to approach. They would never betray Ravana. They can't be bought off, they are too bold and strong."

Beautiful Lanka was decked out like a maiden. Waters and woods were her clothes, bristling spears and darts on the wall were the ends of her long hair; the many-colored waving banners and the cloth-of-gold war-flags nearby them were her jewels and earrings; the high stone missile towers were her breasts cleaving the sky. She was Beautiful Lanka of the Waves, well-defended, built in time long past by Viswakarman the architect of heaven. She seemed a city woven from beauty, made by the mind from a wonderful dream half-remembered.

The late afternoon shadows lengthened, and Hanuman thought, "I will first meet Sita somewhere in there, and she will tell me what to do."

Then as the twilight of evening came and Night fell black over the dark world, Hanuman diminished his size, and took the form of a small long-haired silver tabby cat. He tied Rama's ring round his neck and it was lost in fur. He hid in a ditch and said, "If they see me, a cat roams free at night, and may explore wherever he is curious to go. Three times I take



refuge in Rama, who is the safe shelter of all who flee for help from any thing."

In the dark Hanuman sprang over the moat and walked away from the road, down along the base of the wall to where there was no gate, prancing like a cat on four feet, going a little sideways, his legs stiff and his tail like a plume straight up in the air. Suddenly a dark-skinned woman appeared from nowhere before him, her face crooked in an unlovely smile, flames for her hair and a bleeding tigerskin for her dress, standing there in a halo of glowing lights and moving colors that looked like the burning clouds at the destruction of all the three worlds.

She looked down at Hanuman and said in a despicable voice, "Now be careful, be on your guard! Advance half a hair's point farther and I will kill you!"

"Who are you?" asked Hanuman.

"I am Lanka herself, surrounded by protections, ruled by the hand of Ravana. You cannot enter me, little cat!"

Hanuman said, "Gentle goddess, I am curious to see your hidden charms and attractions. I am a mere monkey, just let me take a quiet look around—"

"Never till the end of Time!" She hissed and kicked Hanuman hard, but he didn't move at all. He sat, and fastened his left forefingers into a fist. Then he jumped up and hit her right between the eyes. Lanka fell on her back. Hanuman helped her to rise, and she put her foot in his way, and drew it back, and stood aside.

"*When a monkey knocks you down, know that a fear and a curse have come to the Rakshasas . . .* so have I heard," said the goddess. "You have vanquished the realm of Lanka with one blow; enter if you will."

Hanuman leapt over the high wall, where there was no door, by night, and landing within he first touched the ground with his left foot, putting that foot on his enemies' heads.

Then across the room, in a corner Hanuman saw a crystal bed raised above a short flight of jeweled steps, under a white umbrella of seven tiers fringed with colors. Flame-red Asoka flowers hung from the four ivory bedposts, and at the head and foot mechanical men, silently driven by falling water in some hidden way, gently fanned the air with yak-tail chowries.

Hanuman drew near and looked up onto the bed. The pale yellow silk sheets were trimmed in diamonds and the many soft pillows were covered with fleecy ram skins. And on that bed lay the Demon King Ravana fast asleep—heroic and dark, wearing white, with twenty arms like gate pillars marked with cool blood-red sandal paste, with ten devilishly handsome heads, with his faces aglow from long heavy gold earrings, sleeping like a deep-breathing hill. Ravana slept unsuspecting, all worn out from love and wine. He was the dear desire of every Rakshasa daughter, and the happiness of every Lanka warrior.

Hanuman jumped from Ravana's bedpost to the bedroom terrace, and from there he leapt into the yard behind the palace. Only behind Ravana's mansion had he not yet looked.

With a little snap, Hanuman discarded his cat disguise. He was again a white monkey, and Rama's ring was on his finger once more. A low stone wall enclosed a grove of Asoka trees behind the palace, and Hanuman sat on that wall slumped over, staring blankly ahead at nothing, scuffing his heels against the stones. The little leaves of all the trees around began to stir in the faint wind of the end of night.

Hanuman was tired out. It seemed he had opened and closed half the doors and windows on Earth; he had looked in rooms and burrows and holes, and even under water along the bottoms of Lanka's lakes and ponds, and he could not find Sita.

Hanuman heard the running wild Wind speaking—*How long? How long?* He opened his eyes and peeked out through his furry fingers. A whirlwind was headed straight on at him, pressing down his hair. Leaves and flowers sailed past him, twigs were snapping, trees were waving, and from Ravana's garden paths loose jewels whipped from the walks and flew singing past his ears. Vayu the Wind took a deep breath and blew his son right over the wall—*Away with you, Oh Child how long, how long will you seek to annoy me? Follow the winds, follow the winds . . . .*

Hanuman tumbled and rolled under an Asoka tree. He picked himself up and brushed the dust from his fur. The wind died down. Hanuman was in Ravana's Asoka Grove. It looked like a wood, but was too neatly kept; it resembled a garden, but it had grown too wild. The beautiful asoka trees had round crests and clusters of long red flowers, and with many other trees and plants they were in a long inward park behind Ravana's sleeping rooms.

Dawn swiftly approached. After a hush, the awakening birds and deer began to talk, but their voices were strangely unhappy. Hanuman wondered, "What grief can there he

here?" He looked around. "Where is Sita? She is somewhere faint and forlorn as the misty Moon, hard to see as a streak of gold covered by dust, hard to find as a bright yellow reed broken grey in the frosty wind and lost when winter comes, fading away as the red scar from a new arrow wound, from the fresh cut of some sharp heavenly weapon."

In the center of the grove Hanuman saw a tall overgrown Sinsapa tree of golden leaves and small white flowers standing by a pond, with torches flickering round it but no one there. And as Night departed and the Sun rose from the sea, he climbed that tree and hid in the leaves, lying along a stout limb and thinking, "Sita always loved to walk the woodlands and bathe in ponds like this among wild creatures; soon she may come here at sunrise."

Sita looked up into the Sinsapa tree and saw a white monkey like a tiny bunch of little lightnings, his red face smiling down at her, his light yellow-brown eyes shining with fires and lights. She rose and held a low branch and said, "Who are you? Now I have let my mind slip into illusion."

Hanuman came down to that branch. "Mother, it's me, Hanuman. I serve Rama. But who are you? Are you a bright star-spirit hiding from her Lord in jealous anger, or are you Sita?"

"I am Sita." Silently she began to cry and tears poured from her eyes. "What star-spirit sheds tears on hearing the name of a mortal King? Oh Hanuman, every sight speaks to me of him, and I fear you are also only a phantom in my mind."

Sita was both sad and happy, like rain in the sunshine. She said, "Blessed are the gods who can steal a look at Rama where he hides, and blessed are the holy men who never love or hate. People cannot thwart Time; behold all of us so sad."

Hanuman replied, "When Rama's hot anger breaks over the world the seas may well boil away. Dear Sita, before Love's eyes Time does not lay on year by year the little heart-blinding spells of age. Before true Love, the maces of Death are frail stage-weapons, fragile and useless for combat. Death gives way to Love and has never dared to war with him."

Sita sighed, and her breath burnt a few sinsapa leaves that hung down near her face. "Soon you must leave me and return, my Hanuman. People will fancy what they see and forget those who have gone. Shamefully I loved a jeweled deer and sent my man away. Here there is no cliff to jump over. I haven't any knife or poison, and only my own braid to hang myself. How is one better than a slave to this life that will not end when it is over and done? Often I weep longing to die . . . ."

"Destroy your sorrow," said Hanuman. "You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen."

"Oh Hanuman."

"But you are, you are supremely fair. Oh Sita, Rama is like a fire-temple, burning from his own fires within. Love's shadows and his darkness are really lights. Tell me what to do for you."

Sita looked at that remarkable and amazing monkey again and again. Her sadness had come and gone, as clouds will draw across the clear night sky, and cover the moonlight, and go again. "Faithful Hanuman, at the year's end Ravana will kill me. Speak so Rama will save me, let him do it, and farewell."

"Farewell, it won't be long."

Hanuman ran unseen to the wall of that Asoka Grove farthest from Ravana's palace. He got all set to jump back across the ocean when an instant monkey thought crossed his mind.

He looked back at Sita. Her face was fair as the Moon. His eyes brightened and he thought, "Will I leave her once more in danger with no sign of good cheer?"

He popped over the low wall and out of Sita's sight. He got bigger again. He said to himself, "I won't hurt Sita's grove and I won't touch the good chariot Pushpaka . . . but all the rest . . . right or wrong!"

A great idea! Hanuman was off like a bolt from a bowstring. He plowed through Ravana's lawns and flowerbeds and pushed over his pavilions. He threw benches and bricks through the palace windows and splattered the sentries with wet muddy lotuses. Horses shied and elephants stampeded, and the deer stared roundeyed and frozen in panic.

Sita untied the corner of her robe and took out the pearl mounted on a gold leaf that her father Janaka had tied into her hair on her wedding day.

"How did you keep that all this time?" asked Hanuman.

"Head pearls are common," smiled Sita. "Say this—*I seem to have no husband. Rama best of men, seeing this gift was like seeing you. Now I part from it and keep your ring. I will live on here for a month and not longer. Do you still think of me at all? I send this pearl so you may know—you are loved by me, you are loved by me.*" Sita smiled her warm white smile that had never an equal then in all the worlds, nor ever shall.

Hanuman hid Sita's jewel in his belt. He walked round her in three right-turning circles, bristled up his fur and flew off to the north.

Hanuman left Lanka behind him. He flew booming along through the air like the wind through a canyon, and the monkeys and bears waiting on the seashore heard him coming. They ran up a grassy hillside and made a circle holding hands, and Hanuman landed in the middle.

"I talked to her; she's alive!" Animals encircled Hanuman; they brought him fruit and water and fresh boughs to sit on; they came up smiling to touch him; they sang and cheered.

Early the next morning Ravana was leaning on the wall over the northern gate looking out, leaning on his twenty arms spread side by side by side along the ramparts, under the shadow of a royal white umbrella. He patiently watched Rama and his army while two demons fanned him with white chowry fans made from yak-tails and trimmed with peacock feathers. He wore white robes like fame and glory, adorned with rubies red as blood; and for a long time he quietly watched the animals.

Ravana saw the golden-haired Sugriva fathered by the Sun; the black-and-brown bear Jambavan; Angada with his long fine yellow hair, pacing with his arms folded, yawning in anger and slapping his tail on the ground; the white monkey Hanuman, come back again to Lanka, strong and gracious; and beside him Rama of tangled hair and dark green skin, holding a bow whose arrows can slice the Earth or pierce the sky—Rama King of the World whose anger is Death, surrounded by animals all willing to die for him.

Sugriva told Rama to stay behind the army with Hanuman. Lakshmana walked back and forth in front of the animals, his skin like pure gold, his lips swollen with wrath, not easy to pacify. *Aaah* . . . the Rakshasas on the Lanka walls sighed like the long-traveling wind storming in from off the sea. They flaunted their glorious war-banners on shiny golden flagstaffs. And back from the monkeys and bears came another deeper sigh, deep and loud as weights of water pouring through a broken sea-wall. *Aaaaa* . . . .

Then at the same instant Lakshmana pointed at Lanka with his bow and Ravana raised a mace over his head. In Lanka the Royal Artillery Commander waved his sword. Batteries of Rakshasa artillery roared fringed with fire; the monkeys and bears closed ranks; the big north gate of Lanka opened; and the youngest third of the Demon Army came out to attack, led by Prahasta on a war-chariot.

But the demons could not win in daylight. Bears broke their cars and killed them with their own axles and flagpoles; long-armed apes caught them and pressed them to death; monkeys flattened them with uptorn trees and cliffs and chopped them up with captured axes like firewood. At noon Prahasta ordered a retreat, and the Rakshasas poured back into Lanka, and the huge northern gate snapped shut like a trap. They waited for darkness.

❦

On the battlefield that Night Rama could see the bearded Kumbhakarna, dark and startling, visible behind the high walls like walking Death. He asked Vibhishana, "Who is that?"

"My brother Kumbhakarna has awakened," answered Vibhishana. "He'll make one mouthful out of our whole army. He is the very crown of our cruelty and the banner of our

strength. Did he not sleep so long he would by now have eaten up all Life on Earth. If he can reach them, he will scrape up your animals and swallow them like little grains of rice .... But tell the monkeys and bears that this is an uplifted war-engine, a huge machine; for if they know he is a living being they will die of fright at the thought, whether he touches them or not, and we will swiftly lose this war."

"I'll send them to the back." Rama summoned Sugriva and told him, "Withdraw from the field."

"No," said the Monkey King. "They say that the gateway arch to Kumbhakarna's house rises so high that every noon-day the Sun must pass under it on his way around the Earth. They say that giant is so heavy that he draws in the flood tides when he walks near the sea. But people talk too much! Why should we move aside? Why give way, leaving you behind us?"

Kumbhakarna stepped over the wall, swinging his monstrous arms in anger. Like a pillar of light, his spear-shaft caught the torch-beams of Lanka on its golden ornaments. Kumbhakarna saw the monkeys and bears and thought, "Animals like these were always the innocent ornaments of our gardens. Rama is the cause of this war; I will kill Rama and end it!" He turned in Rama's direction and cried out his horrible, unnatural war-cry, a shuddering sound, so low and deep it could be felt through the ground, and yet shrill and piercing, and getting louder—

And that cry alone broke the formations of the animals. They fell unconscious, or lay trembling and unable to move, or ran to hide in quiet places, not looking back, and a curtain of dust rose from their feet running in panic.

Kumbhakarna took a long step towards Rama, and beneath his foot Earth lurched and swayed like a swing. The animals' war-fires spilled and rolled burning over the land. Prince Angada tried to stop the fleeing monkeys and bears. "Think of the King, think of your good name and fame! Your wives will scorn you—"

Still they ran past him—*Life is dear!*

"Sound an alert! Return!"

But each animal thought, "He is after me!" In an instant the army had fled. But Hanuman came from somewhere and stood quietly beside Angada, and they saw Sugriva not far away, and Jambavan the sullen Bear King had stood his ground. But between Rama and Kumbhakarna there was only Lakshmana.

Then from where he stood Hanuman jumped hard and high at Kumbhakarna and bit a piece out of his ear. Kumbhakarna whirled, very fast, and struck Hanuman down with his great spear. But that blow broke the iron shaft, and as Hanuman fell stunned Kumbhakarna threw aside the piece he still held and advanced on Rama unarmed.

No one remained except Lakshmana, but his arrows could not penetrate the stiff coily hair that covered Kumbhakarna's body wherever his armor did not. Kumbhakarna looked way

down at Lakshmana and said, "You also are dead, when Rama dies!" Then he stepped over him and quickly advanced on Rama.

Rama took three steps backwards and aimed an arrow with bent knots like thunderbolts. He released it; it flew and struck Kumbhakarna in the chest, right through his armor. Kumbhakarna paused and stood still, and blood poured from his wound.

That wound alone was fatal, but his hatred for Rama kept Kumbhakarna alive and his murderous heart did not fail. He cried out—*I am not Vali the monkey shot in the back; I am Kumbhakarna poised over you!*

Rama shot a straight-flying arrow with a broad razor head and cut off Kumbhakarna's right arm, which fell crushing trees and rocks. Still Kumbhakarna kept coming, he yelled—*I tear Earth apart and pull down stars; I fall on you like Doom!*

Rama cut off his left arm. It fell into the sea and bruised the whales, and Kumbhakarna shouted—*No one can slay me; no one can stop me!*

Again Rama twice drew back his bow, and with two thirsty arrows cut off Kumbhakarna's legs. The giant fell only a

Hanuman jumped hard and high at Kumbhakarna

few bows'-lengths from Rama. Still he managed to move, something carried him on, and his mouth opened and closed —*Let all Creation see the might of Kumbhakarna awake, and tremble!*

Then with one final arrow Rama beheaded Kumbhakarna. The giant head rolled downhill into the sea and sank to the bottom. It was near the hour of dawn and Rama stood alone against the sky. For a few moments he kept shooting his gold-covered arrows up through the air and into Lanka, and the snap of his bowstring struck terror into the Demons' hearts. With golden arrows Rama was scattering the Night. The sky lightened behind Lanka. The stars faded, caught in the skies of heaven and defeated by the eastern Sun rising all in flames. Soon Rama stood in sunlight and unstrung his bow.

When he heard that Kumbhakarna's life was lost, the hot fumes of anger filled Ravana's heart. He stood on the wall and saw his brother's body and limbs blocking the fields outside Lanka. Smoke swirled out of his ten mouths and hung in the air round his heads like a dismal shroud.

Ravana hurried to war. He put on his night-armor finely woven from dull black steel and ten dread dark helmets that hid his faces. Over his two-wheeled war-car he raised the battle-banner of Lanka, a cloth of gold shining bright, and said, "I send out many warriors and few return. Now I must go myself, let Earth take warning . . . ." And he thought to himself, "Death, now whirl your maces and rods and strike with your clubs—I am at chance this day . . . ."

On that chariot Ravana loaded a hundred tough horn-tipped bows as hard to stretch as the mind; and a thousand quivers of his own arrows, long and thick, vanes and shaft all made from one piece of blue iron; and a long straight sword; and an irresistible eight-sided mace. The chariot was armored by shields and plates cut from dark brass, and drawn by four white horses. Tied loose on the central flagstaff were the ten golden arrows for the ten directions of his Empire.

With his many hands Ravana needed no charioteer. He leapt like a lion into his car and drove out from his palace into the city streets. His horses broke into a run and the Rakshasa people along the way yelled and cheered, lining the wide streets, changing their shapes and colors from their emotions, and the chariot wheels crashed and clattered over the yellow bricks.

Then the Demon King left Lanka through the fifth gate, by the Gate of Illusion. The monkeys and bears were watching all the four city walls to see which one would open, when Ravana and his horses and chariot winked into view coming down through the air and hit the ground just west of Lanka with a smash like a mountain falling flat upon the world.

Ravana stopped a little way forward of the wall and looked out across the plain, where at a distance he saw the moving golden ends of Rama's bow like waving torchlights in the darkness, and saw Rama facing him on foot and unafraid.

Swarming at Rama came a million arrows with iron arrow-heads of sharp animal faces—the keen faces of wolves and eagles and sharks, iron teeth that closed and bit when they struck flesh. They tore down all over; but Rama answered them with flights of his Ayodhya arrows again all gold-covered, bearing his name, feathered with white and blue heron plumes; and he dropped them severed from the sky.

Then light-handed, Rama cut off Ravana's heads with arrow-blades, and the lifeless heads rolled away with their long earrings and shadowy helmets, dusty and bleeding dark. All Fire-tempered, Rama's arrows with sharp heads and even knots flew howling like hurricanes.

But the heads grew back. Hundreds of heads rolled killed, but there was Ravana again, never turning back from war, bearing to Rama ill-will and weapons. There in his chariot stood once more the Demon King of many talents, many felonies, many evasions.

Rama squeezed his long green arms. First saying the Mantra, he called the Fire-weapon and shot an arrow straight up. Down upon Ravana fell arrows that burned. Their bright-burning points were windows of light; heaven through the dark was full of windows open to all the worlds above.

Ravana spoke the rain-mantra over an arrow and released it. Clouds came out of nowhere. Water drenched the world, the fire-arrows went out and blackness fell.

Rama and Ravana dueled with arrows. One after another, Rama broke the bows out of Ravana's hands until ninety-nine were gone and only one remained. The Demon King shot arrows long and short, thick and thin, quick and slow, from close range or far away; but Rama's armor was hard and impenetrable, he was unharmed and many arrows melted away when he saw them come.

Ravana seized his mace of iron set with lapis stones and embellished with gold, hung with iron-mouthed bells and entwined with red blossoms, for years daily washed with blood and now smoking and straining to strike, an eight-sided mace which would return from flight into the thrower's hands.

Ravana drove to attack. He gripped the iron handle with four hands and swung as the chariots met. It was too soon and the blow fell on the charioteer and not Rama, but Matali knocked that mace hard aside with his bronze fist.

Then Ravana drew apart and stopped. He whirled his mace in a circle rising and dipping his heads; and the mace moaned —*Woe . . . Woe . . . Woe*—

The mace went faster and faster. Matali drove to deceive Ravana's aim and Rama reached for Indra's weapons-racks. He took a spear, held it in one hand, slapped it with the palm of his other hand and threw it. That great dart went at Ravana resonant and vibrating with sound, with a noise like the thunder of a rockslide, a loud falling noise like a cliff falling, the dark world falling, Ravana falling . . . .

And the Demon Lord let go his mace; it sped, and Rama stood in its way. Ravana's chariot turned to run.

Rama's spear broke Ravana's flagpole; the cloth-of-gold war-flag fell. Rama broke the ten arrows of the Rakshasa Empire, and when he did, the running demon car lost its rattle and clatter and its wheels turned on in mournful silence. The flag of Lanka lay in the dust.

Matali couldn't outdrive Ravana's mace, but he dropped his reins and stood up himself in its path; and it glanced off his broad chest and knocked him violently from the car, and went by Rama deflected just enough to miss him.

Rama wept and bit his lip. The mace turned to go back to Ravana, but Rama threw himself from the chariot and seized it. He knelt and broke it like a stick over his thigh—*Good Fortune to you!*—once, into two pieces—*Peace to you!*—and twice, into four. Deep red blood ran over his green skin.

The four pieces of the mace kept pulling back to Ravana, and Rama cried—*Would you?*—and hurled them at the Demon King. Ravana quickly turned aside; and as he had spurned them, the four angry chunks of iron tore into Earth and vanished noisily underground.

Matali lay on his back unconscious. His heavenly armor was torn, and his ten horses stood still, their faces near his, looking down at him. A flood of sorrow filled Rama's heart to see him hurt. Rama touched him and untied his breastplate, and said, "Here indeed your loyalty has had unjust reward!"

Matali revived from Rama's touch. He looked up and saw Rama bending over him, saw his horses raise their heads, and following their look saw Ravana's chariot coming again, but moving strangely slow. By some chance he yet lived, and he felt the life flow back into his body.

Rama brought water from Indra's chariot, and some cloth that he began to rip apart for binding Matali's wide wounds. The silver car was stricken and dented. The horses pawed at the ground with their front feet. "Majesty," said Matali, "I'll be well, there's time enough for that later."

Rama said, "Good. It's fast nearing dawn, but drink just a little." Then after Matali drank, Rama sipped water three times. "Lie still, I don't need the car now." Rama took up his every-colored bow, and there stood Rama the great archer, Rama the good bowman, the friend of every man.

He was all fiery to see. Wild little flames came from his skin, his green eyes gleamed, then swift as thought Rama shot his arrows. He broke off one wheel of Ravana's chariot and it tipped over and left the Demon King also standing on the ground, holding his last bow and a sword, facing him; and the white horses ran away with the broken car.

Rama opened a long bamboo case at his belt and took out the brass-bladed grass arrow given to him by Agastya, and notched it on his bowstring. That arrow could rend walls and gateways of stone; it breathed and sighed. Rama pulled his bow. He took three aiming steps backwards and held his breath.

Ravana took on the brilliant form of Indra the King of Heaven. He was glorious and gracious, all illumined; he could scarcely be looked at, and a halo of radiance and energy danced around him. Rama was dazed by Ravana's false figure. He could not bear to shoot at such a divine form, at such fair beauty.

Matali the Charioteer was watching. He could be enchanted by no beauty but a fair woman's. He raised himself painfully on one arm and called out to Rama—*Strike, Strike, That's not my Master.*

That was then the destined time and true setting of Ravana's death. Rama thought—*I must believe it! Oh kill him!*—

Rama shot. The bowstring rang out, all over the Universe. That arrow first broke the sword and bow Ravana raised to ward it, then it hit Ravana's breast and struck through his heart, stealing his life, and never stopped, but came out from his back and entered the Earth.

Down from Ravana's hands fell his broken bow and sword, and the Demon King of Lanka fell dying in his own dark form.

At first Rama didn't move. Then he first unstrung his bow and put it aside. Then he lifted Matali into Indra's rain-chariot and the misty horses rose running through the sky and were gone.

At daybreak, at dawn Ravana died. He was a fire not burning, an ocean still with no tides. He could no longer speak. He could not know whatever might happen around him. He could not move; he grew cold; he had no thought; he did not breathe.

The Rakshasas who had watched the war turned away in fear from the walls and hid in Lanka. And darkly the Kings of the four quarters of the world glanced, but none saw what way Ravana went then.

here's love!

And so the War of Lanka was ended on the morning of the fourth day, just past the first night of the New Moon, near to the solstice of Winter when Spring dares begin again, and the Sun turns in his sky to come back to us. Rama took off his armor and the day grew warm. Surya the Sun was pouring out bright silver and fine gold. He threw his beams down cordially over that morning world—a fine reliable figure of light, a handsome person, a happy sight—indeed a part of the world well-made, very well done, all of it.

Hanuman and the Rakshasa Vibhishana and his four demon knights came swiftly to Rama's side. Vibhishana held a bundle and said, "Dear Lord, wear these clothes Lakshmana sends to you now."

"They're not Rakshasa robes?"

"He carried and kept them somehow throughout all your wanderings." Vibhishana smiled. "They're from Ayodhya. I don't know how he did it."

"Fair Ayodhya!" Rama dressed, and saw that Hanuman also held something. "Monkey, what have you got there?"

"All the ornaments she let fall upon our hill." Hanuman looked at the dead Ravana. "Master, is he really dead? What did Suka say? What else happened? When can we—"

"Oh enough, Hanuman!" Rama looked round at the world. "Long love is now remembered. Be still. I've recovered her, we are reunited and all the old lovely colors return and come again into my view. Go to her, tell Sita we have won!"

Hanuman flew like a flash to the Asoka Grove behind Ravana's palace, his white robes streaming out, his white fur ruffled with joy. He found Sita alone under the golden Sinsapa tree. But now she was dressed as a princess. Her dress was new; she wore a woven crown of fresh and fragrant wildflowers and new leaves, and her braid had a ribbon. There by her tree were a bronze comb and mirror, and sandalpaste and dark dust for brow and eye.

Oh blameless Sita, you are the fairest woman in all Creation, and no goddess can compare to you. Your face is bright as the Moon, you are more giving and forgiving than your mother Earth, more beautiful than Lakshmi, if that may have been. And Rama, what is the use our singing of her charms when you and she have sung your two songs together?

"Well, this makes sense for a change!" Hanuman greeted the doe-eyed Sita, so bold and beautiful. "This is the first nice day there's been for a long time on Old Earth!"

"Oh, it's perfect!" Sita smiled, and her smiles were forever warm and loving; they would carry anyone away, intoxicate him more than any wine, and leave him floating on the waves, in the air high above himself. "Now I leave all sorrow behind me."

Hanuman hit his tail on the ground and tipped his head to one side and laughed. "Mother, we are all well. Thanks to you we have won. Ravana is killed and you must have no fear, for you will soon be in your own house with Rama."

"Good betide you, Hanuman! My white monkey child dearer to me than life, I am so proud of you! What have you got there?"

The tip of Hanuman's tail curved up. "Look!"

"That's my yellow scarf!"

Hanuman said, "Guess what else," and opened his package.

"How heartwarming!" said Sita. "My ornaments from Anasuya, and my pink shell necklace from Guha the Hunter King." She put them on, earrings and anklets and bracelets and necklace. "How do I look?"

Hanuman only smiled. Then he said, "Ask Rama."

Sita grew quieter. "How is he?"

"Come and find out!" Hanuman looked around with his clear red eyes. "Where is everybody?"

Sita smiled, and drove out even the name of care from Hanuman's monkey mind. "What have you to do with them now?"

"Right, it's all finished and done."

"Thank you for your graciousness and true generosity," said Sita. "I have no fit reward for you—but Hanuman, Son of the Wind, you will always know and remember the True. You will always be strong and faithful, noble and wise and daring! Always excellent powers will grace you and crown you, and I give you my real love forever!"

"Oh," said Hanuman, "What else are treasures but your good words and love? They are rare and precious jewels. It's like finding a lost way, like lighting up a lamp in the dark, like picking up what's fallen down or showing what's been hidden."

"So promise me to pardon the race of demons now, and go tell Rama I'm ready, I await him. Where is he anyway?"

"Yes. The war's over. I promise," said Hanuman. "And I think he's waiting for *me*!" He leapt into the air and flew back to Rama's side.

Now we return to Rama, Lord of the World. Gradually the monkeys and bears came back to the field outside Lanka, friendly to each other but fearless in war, and Hanuman found Rama there among many friends, embracing the animal kings Sugriva and old Jambavan.

Hanuman said, "Go to her."

But Rama spoke to Vibhishana. "Lanka King, bring Sita here. Let her be seen."

Vibhishana obeyed. He went and told Sita, "I come from your own Lord Rama, with a glad heart."

One of Vibhishana's courtiers said, "My King and I myself . . . we bring our best and kindest wishes for you and all your friends, that is . . . for you and for the entire population of Earth . . . ."

Then Sita, whose waist could be clasped round by Rama's fingers, came out of Lanka. The monkeys and bears drew back to let her by, thinking—*Oh yes, this is from the old times back.*

Then as Sita walked to Rama, her gentle face aglow with love, King Vibhishana beside her, all the animals and Lakshmana also bowed to her. They were all kneeling in a circle around her, and they did not move.

Rama said in a happy voice, laughing as he spoke, "I've won the war, what more do I need to know! Give me her hand."

Agni placed Sita's hand in Rama's, then drew back his own arm quick as a serpent's tongue. Rama had burned him!

Sita said, "With excellent joy, with delight cast looks on me. I am a fair free woman, I surrender to you of my own will, command me anything."

Rama tied Sita's wedding pearl-leaf back in her hair and unbound her braid. "Now you're mine again, with Fire for the witness."

The Fire God was happy. Indra shook his head. He had lived a long long time, but now he had come face to face with something older, some power immeasurably old, from before . . . Indra looked helpless. He said to Sita, "We all serve you," and both gods vanished. And Vibhishana the demon also told Sita, "I too will always protect you wherever you are!"

Sita held Rama. *I am near to you.* She ran her fingers down his face and shut her eyes and slightly parted her lips. *Oh my love, my lover—Oh!*

Still all the kneeling figures on that plain did not look up or

Sita put Rama's wide gold ring that Hanuman had brought her back on his finger. She whispered more words like honey in his ear, and at midmorning they walked away down the hill hand in hand, and Rama soon dropped Sita's hand and held her round her waist close to him as they went.

They reached a leafy cabin built by Lakshmana, and Sita sat and put Rama's head on her lap,

the wonderful return

On the hillside in the Sun,
The King is home, his war is done.
The fountains play and I can hear
The Master of the Revels cheer,
And singing soft and music clear.

The flowers in their colors there
Are falling down beside the stair,
And Fair Ayodhya at my feet,
And all along her silver street
My friends I find, my loves I meet.

And this is how my world shall be;
My days are bright, my ways are free.

Rama rode with Sita. He said, "Look down, there are the heavenly flowers marking where we fought and won you; there is the shore and our bridge thrown across the sea; there is Ocean, seeming endless with no farther shore, and that bridge seems to go off into the sky over the edge of Earth."

Vibhishana approached them. "Lord, free the sea as my gift." Rama smiled, and as they watched, the waters stopped holding up the bridge stones. The long bridge broke and sank; it was gone. The waves danced, leaping unbounded.

Then on the next day they all flew to Ayodhya. Rama told Sita, "I'll show you; see, there is Rishyamukha Hill where we met that Hanuman; there is desolate Dandaka Forest, now free from harm, and there is where we burned the Vulture King Jatayu. Here come the Vindhya Hills and Agastya's hermitage. There is Chitrakuta—"

"Chitrakuta Hill in springtime!" Sita laid her head on Rama's shoulder. "Remember? And the birds all singing!"

"There flows the Yamuna river."

"From way up here the trees are like a carpet and the rivers are small as threads! How wonderful!"

Rama said, "By the grinding rapids of Yamuna and Ganga is Bharadwaja's retreat. Let me invite him to Fair Ayodhya to repay the feast he gave Bharata."

Pushpaka landed where Yamuna meets the Ganges. Rama met Bharadwaja and asked, "How is Bharata?"

Bharadwaja embraced Rama and smelled the crown of his head. "He is fine. But send him word you are safe."

"I will. Ride with us and be our guest; let us return the welcome, the feast that you gave."

The night passed quickly by. Soon the sky grew light and the morning Sun rose red for Rama to see him. Bharata had brought the Ayodhya throne from Nandigrama village to the royal park by the palace so everyone could see Rama made king.

Rama came out, like a lion coming out of his cave, and girls tossed fragrant flowers from windows and rooftops. He walked to the park with Lakshmana holding a seven-tiered white parasol over him. White cows were tied all along the way. Bharata and Sugriva the monkey King stood behind the throne holding white yaktail fans. Rama sat on the throne facing east, and Sita sat on a lower chair beside him, on a deerskin cover trimmed in gold. The animals and demons and men gathered there sat down on the grass.

Virgin maids brought spotless white cattle with gold-plated horns, and unthreshed heads of grain for Rama to touch. Then Vasishtha entered the park holding a hollow horn wrapped in silver wire and a little dipper. First the priest stopped by Hanuman and dipped some of the river water of all the world into the horn. Four brahmanas unsealed four brimful stone jars of seawater. Four Ayodhya girls set before Rama a handful of jewels and one of seed, a handful of herbs and one of sea pearls.

Rama gave many presents—horses and cows, earrings and bracelets, rings and bells and a silver crest for Sugriva, and round Sita's neck he fastened a smooth pearl necklace. Sita held the strands in her hand and looked at them, and looked at Rama, and looked at the animals.

Rama said, "Give those pearls to whom you please!"

Lotus-eyed Sita gave them to Hanuman. He knelt before her and she put the pearls around his neck and smiled at him. The necklace seemed to glow like little moons nestled in his white fur. "This gift is for your courage and strength, your valor and bravery and skill, and for your faithful service."

Rama said to all his people, "I am pleased that you have gathered here to welcome me."

They cheered back—*King Rama! Rule forever!*

The Ayodhya throne, all red and gold, was carried into the King's palace, and the coronation was over. All afternoon the animals and men ate their way through hills of food and drank up lakes of Rama's wines, and there was not one person without some gift. Evening came and the Sun set as Ayodhya sang her twilight prayers. Then Night veiled the worlds as Rama went into the inner rooms with Sita.

So passed the first day of Rama's long reign of eleven thousand years. Rama could discover the truth of things, and men resorted to him from all over Earth, as the rivers of the world all flow to the sea. Rama was well-honored and well-loved. His presence filled the heart.

Rama was strong enough to support all men, and gentle as the new Moon's beams. Fame and Wealth never left him. When he was king men were long in life, and lived surrounded by their children and grandchildren and all their families. The old never had to make funerals for the young. There was rain and fertile Earth; indeed, the Earth became bountiful.

Peace and Rama ruled as friends together, and bad things did not happen. Men grew kind and fearless. Everyone had about him a certain air and look of good fortune.

A King like Rama was never seen before and nowhere remembered from the past in any kingdom, nor did any like him ever follow in the later ages of this world.

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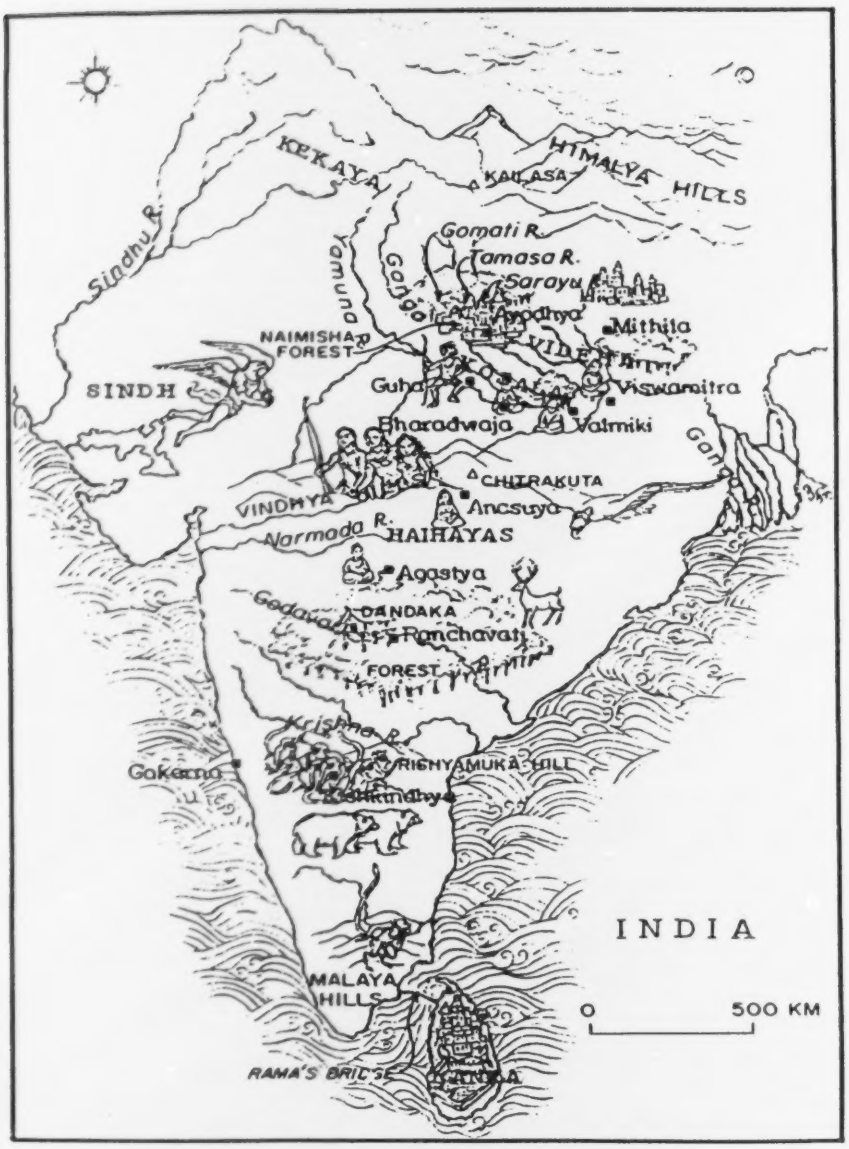
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RAMA'S BRIDGE

NOTES TO ACCOMPANY THE RAMAYANA

Page 1 The narrator speaks, describing Rama and his behavior.

Page 2 The conversation between Rama and Sita reveals her intelligence as she argues to be allowed to acccompany him. Note her positive vs Rama's negative descriptions.

Page 3 Sumantra is reminded of his dharma (duty) as a member of the warrior caste to be brave, kind, skillful and unafraid of death.
Ganga is the river goddess who is filtered through Shiva's hair. The Ganga, is the River Ganges,India's most sacred river.

Page 4 Discuss Guha's concept of Freedom.
Note also that Rama has not been a good hunter. What might be the reason for this?

Page 5 There are delightful descriptions of foods and of cigar smoking. What does this tell us about the culture?
Note the drinking bout of Guha and Lakshmana. Is this a world-wide male ritual? Why isn't Rama involved?
Note Rama's concern for his father as he sends the charioteer back to report.

Page 6 Articulated is the universal need for friends.

Page 7 A personified description of the mountain adds to the almost paradisical aspect of place.

Page 8 Again, the personification of nature echoes the mood of peacefulness and plenty. This points up the difference in Dandaka Forest descriptions which come later.
Agastya gives Rama and bow and two arrows which will be important in the future.

Page 9 The group leave and prepare to enter the land of demons. Notice how the descriptions reflect the mood of danger and gloom as the thirsty dry jungles and menacing creatures replace the pleasant images on page 8.

Page 10 The perils are laid out. What are they?
Is war better than fear?

Page 11 Sita admonishes Rama not to look for trouble. Does she reflect a universal feeling of women who are peace keepers? Dharma is explained by Rama and the Code of the Warrior is explained. Do you agree with this Code?

Page 12 Surpanakha cannot have Rama so she looks at his brother. Note his rather humorous responses before he becomes angry.
Note how Rama's weapons warn of danger.

Page 13 Ravana is introduced.

Page 14 Ravana's sister goads him into battle, unlike Sita who advises against conflict. Note how she gets him interested.

Page 15 Ravana calls on an uncle to help him overcome Sita and Rama.

Page 16 Why does Lakshmana recognize this is not a real deer but Rama does not?

Page 17 Sita misreads Lakshmana's motive and this angers him. What does this reveal about Lakshmana?

Page 18 Ravana appears in a disguise which he knows will fool Sita. As in Greek society, kindness to strangers, which Sita shows Ravana, is expected.

Page 19 The famous abduction scene is played out. Note Sita's cleverness in dropping her ornaments. Note also that the gods take an interest.

Page 21 The vulture king reveals he tried to save Sita.

Page 22 Here we meet Hanuman in disguise as a woodsman. He quickly reveals himself to Rama, however.

Page 25 Hanuman goes to find Sita and encounters Lanka, the goddess whose city Lanka is.
Hanuman disguises himself as a cat.

Page 26 Hanuman continues his search. Finally his father, the Wind blows him to the Asoka Grove.

Page 27 Sita and Hanuman meet.

Page 28 Hanuman destroys Ravana's palace and then returns to say goodbye to Sita. She gives Hanuman a pearl for Rama.

Page 30 Rama faces the giant, Kumbhakarna, and the battle begins.

Pg.31-5 The battle is described. As in most epics, there are some very bloody descriptive passages.

Page 35 Rama, showing his quality of compassion, stops to aid Matali, Indra's charioteer, who has been aiding him.

Page 35 Ravana finally dies and the heroes can begin the return home. Has Ravana any redeeming qualities?

Page 36 Hanuman's reward for his efforts will be his reputation among all men; however, his special reward is Sita's love.

Page 37 Sita asks that the race of demons be pardoned, an interesting request. What does this show about her nature?

Page 38 From here on, the group are on their triumphant way home. They eventually arrive at the palace. Sita first provess her chastity before the pair start on their way and again after she has been exiled for twelve years in the forest. This exile was after 10,000 years of rule by Rama.

THE RAMAYANA

NOTES TO THE TEACHER

The Ramayana is one of India's epic treasures, as popular today as it was hundreds of years ago when it was composed by the poet, Valmiki. Like Homer, Valmiki is something of a legend. He is said to have lived somewhere in the northern part of India between 200 BC and 200 AD,dates which have been determined from linguistic evidence. Some traditions make him a reformed robber.)thers say he was the sage with whom Sita lived after she was exiled by Rama, and the Ramayana was Valmiki's way of informing Rama and Sita's children of their father's life. Whatever the source of its composition, the epic ranks with the world's great literature and provides a key to Hindu culture and beliefs.

Briefly, the Ramayana (Rama's Way or the "Romance of Rama) is a long epic of 25,000 verses, telling the story of Prince Rama of Ayodhya. Prince Rama is forced to flee his country, abdicating his throne in favor of a half-brother due to interference by his step-mother. He and his faithful wife, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmana, depart into the wilds. They meet wise sages, ogres, and Rakshasas (demons) in their travels. A major obstacle must be overcome when Sita is stolen by Ravana, the demon king. Rama is aided by Hanuman, monkey prince, and an army of monkeys and bears, and finally overcomes Ravana on his island of Lanka, and he and Sita return to Ayodhya where Rama is crowned king. In the original version of the story, Sita's faithfulness is questioned by Rama and she immolates herself to prove her faithfulness. She is saved by the Fire god and she and Rama live out their lives. In another version, after several years as King of Ayodhya, evil rumors are spread that Sita was unfaithful while a captive of Ravana and Rama exiles her from the city. In the forest she gives birth to Rama's children who are raised by the poet, Valmiki. This second rejection was probably a later addition to the poem, however.

In reading the epic, one benefits from some understanding of Sanskrit narrative poetry. A narrator weaves the individual episodes into a long tale of Rama's life. Descriptions of nature suggest the mood. Divine intervention is frequent, good prevails over evil and the underlying moral values of the society are enforced.(See vanNooten's Introduction to William Buck's translation of the Ramayana.

Strong characters, exciting adventures, and emphasis on duty, love of country, personal honor, use of one's intelligence, bravery and concern for others are common facets of both the Odyssey and the Ramayana. Because the two heroes, Odysseus and Rama and their respective wives, Penelope and Sita, embody the best of their societies, they make an excellent venue for introducting two of the world's most remarkable cultures.

If one uses Joseph Campbell's Adventure Keys, which can be applied to all mythical heroes, one sees the commonality in human

desires and aspirations in these two cultures.Briefly, Campbell's keys sum up an epic involving a hero in the following way:

> "The mythological hero, setting forth from his commonday hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily roceeds to the threshold of adventure....The hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him, some of which give magical aid..When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward....The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection....At the end the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread and the boon he brings restores the world...."

Since most teachers are familiar with the Odyssey and have sufficient textual and interpretative materials, our aim is to provide some guidance in teaching the Ramayana as a companion piece.

The text we use is a retelling of the epic by William Buck, published by the University of California. This is a very readable text, easily understood by ninth grade students. However, there are many versions in English and teachers may wish to use a different text.

Selections have been chosen with an eye to providing a key to the character of Rama and to a lesser extent, that of his wife, Sita, both as human characters and as mythological examples of the best of a culture. The adventures are exciting and the monkey king, Hanuman, is a wonderfully imaginative character. The battles are bloody and suspenseful,and the introduction of gods and demons who help and interfere with the heroes certainly is familiar to anyone who has a knowledge of Greek epics. Narrative passages contain some wonderful figurative language and add to the poetry of the work.Finally, similarities to the Odyssey make this an attractive way to expand the ninth grade canon.

The fact that the Ramayana has inspired religious festivals, temple ceremonies, holidays, countless sculptures, dance and music performances throughout the Hindu world over the centuries, gives the teacher a great fund of visual material. Indeed, the recent screening of both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata on Indian television kept the country glued to sets through two years of Sunday mornings. Like the Iliad and the Odyssey, these are living classics and anyone who wishes to be a citizen of the world should have some exposure to them.

The essay by Tom Lynn, which compares the Odyssey and Ramayana, provides an excellent introduction to the project. Sample guide questions, composition and discussion topics and a glossary are intended to help teachers as they begin to teach a less familiar work. We suggest using the William Buck translation, although another translation is certainly an alternative.We encourage teachers and interested students to read the entire Buck version of the epic.

Although a teacher may feel inadequately prepared to deal

with the Ramayana, due to lack of knowledge of Hinduism, Indian culture and mythology, it is our experience that these feelings should not be a deterrent. The story is understandable,and accessible, especially with the glossary, and one can enjoy the tale and its hero and heroine without a great deal of background information. Surely, some understanding of Hindu culture would add to one's enjoyment, but this is not necessary. The figurative language is delightful and the characters of the principal figures provide an insight into universal human behavior. One should be aware of the Hindu concept of cyclical time in which days and years are not figured the same way ours are; however, this isn't terribly important to the story. Demons and talking animals are found in many literary traditions and in their ways enhance the attractiveness and depth of the story. Certainly the help of the gods is familiar to any who have read the Odyssey and Iliad. The contest between of good and evil is a feature in all literary traditions and in this time of cynicism, reading about good people who triumph over adversity may help our young people to have more positive views of their own futures.

The text has been prepared with a wide margin; it is hoped that students and teachers will use this to raise questions and comments. We suggest that students use a Reading Log approach as they read, making note of interesting passages, reactions they have to characters and events, and questions for discussion. Discovering a text together makes an excellent learning experience for both teacher and student. However, we have added a certain amount of commentary and indicated writing topics for those teachers who would like a safety net as they venture into the unknown.

THE HEROIC CODE

It may be fairly asserted not only that Rama, like Odysseus, is an epic hero, but that the qualities of the epic hero encompassed by aidos: use of intelligence, physical strength, courage, cunning--and kudos: respect for elders and the gods, concern for others, especially those under one, proper use of wealth, material things, and property--apply to Rama as well as Odysseus. The parallels between them in this respect are suggested in the following passages that address their qualities in general.

"The tests(including the tests on Ithaka) are passed by the exercise of virtues viz.(in ascending order) physical courage and strength; ingenuity where these might fail; restraint, patience, tact and self-control; and the will for home. These are the virtues not of Man, but of a particular valiant, resourceful, much enduring hero, established as such in the Iliad, and developed in (the Odyssey). (Richard Lattimore: in the introduction to his translation of the Odyssey.)

"Homer portrayed Odysseus as a man of outstanding wisdom, eloquence, resourcefulness, courage, and endurance...In the Odyssey, Odysseus had many opportunities for displaying his talent for ruses and deceptions; but at the same time his courage, loyalty, and magnanimity were constantly attested."
(Encyclopedia Britannica 1991).

Compare these characteristics with those given to Rama in the Ramayana:

"Rama's nature was quiet and free. He didn't give good advice and tell others what he thought best and show them their mistakes. He knew when to save and when to spend. He could judge men finely and keep his own counsel. He could read hearts. He knew his own faults better than the failings of others. He could speak well and reason in a chain of eloquent words...He could speak every language and was an expert archer who shot golden arrows; and he didn't believe that what he preferred from (sic) himself was always best for everyone else.

Rama was kind and courteous and never ill. To harsh words he returned no blame. He was warmhearted and generous and a real friend to all....He was a remarkable prince and almost everyone loved him....He was a quiet, strong man; he could bend iron in his hands or fix a bird's broken wing." (William Buck, Ramayana, University of California, 1981, pp. 58-59.

It seems that both Rama and Odysseus possess characteristics in common including wisdom, physical strength, magnanimity and eloquence. Both heroes were brave,strong and physically gifted; they were also intelligent and eloquent. Odysseus is referred to by Homer as "nimble-witted" and often got himself out of scrapes by using his intelligence. Rama also in many places speaks with great wisdom. He admonishes his brother at one point to keep the truth which will last longer than time or possessions.

One obvious teaching strategy involves comparison using the Greek concepts of aidos and kudos in discussing the epic hero. Aidos refers to the hero's responsibility to others and includes traits such as: showing respect and courtesy to superiors, kindness to inferiors, help to comrades and the proper use of property. Kudos represents the hero's striving for individual glory by displaying bravery and heroism, physical strength and prowess and using intelligence and cunning. However, one must also be aware of the Hindu concept of Dharma.

THE CONCEPT OF DHARMA

"The Ramayana epitomizes the spirit of ancient India with its vague but grand concepts of moral rectitude and its consequences for a person's fate. Both Rama and Sita are portrayed as following their dharma, a term meaning 'personal duty' as well as 'law, eternal law,' and personified as the God of Justice."
(B.A. van Nooten in his introduction to Buck's translation, p.xx)

Rama himself speaks of the importance of observing dharma:
"For every broken promise breaks away a little Dharma, and every break of Dharma brings closer the day the worlds too must break apart.....If man breaks his word, why should the stars above keep their promises not to fall? Why should Fire not burn us all or Ocean not leap his shores and drown us?'

In applying the idea of dharma to Odysseus, we can make a case for his attention to personal duty. Perhaps he went about this in a different way, and one can cite what seem to us to be lapses. However, Odysseus was driven by high ideals, even if he sometimes slipped from high actions.

ROLE OF THE DIVINE

Throughout the Odyssey the hero is aided by Athena, just as Rama receives help from Indra, the king of heaven. Both heroes, also, are bothered by evil or mischievous gods and demons who put great obstacles in their way.

THE WIVES

Penelope and Sita are above all the epitome of faithfulness in women. Penelope waits for twenty years, cleverly putting off the suitors who harass her. Sita follows Rama into exile and keeps herself utterly faithful even when captured by the demon king, Ravana. Both women display cleverness and kindness to others but above all, it is their faithfulness and devotion to their husbands which the epics seem to stress.

A passage from David Kinsley's Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition(University of California Press, 1986) helps to point up how Sita embodies the highest calling of Hindu women:

"In the Hindu tradition a woman is taught to understand herself primarily in relation to others. She is taught to emphasize in the development of her character what others expect of her. It is society that puts demands on her, primarily through the agents of relatives and in-laws, and not she who places demands on society that she be allowed to develop a unique, independent destiny. A central demand placed on women, particularly vis-a-vis males, is that they subordinate their welfare to the welfare of others. Hindu women are taught to cultivate an attitude that identifies their own welfare with the welfare of others, especially that of their husbands and children." (p. 77)

"Sita's self-effacing nature, her steadfast loyalty to her husband, and her chastity make her both the ideal Hindu wife and the ideal <u>pativrata</u> (the wife devoted entirely to her husband). ...Throughout the <u>Ramayana</u>, Sita constantly thinks of Rama and his welfare and always remains faithful to him despite provocations on his part....He entertains doubts about her chastity while she was under Ravana's control, he allows her to undergo an ordeal by fire....Throughout all this Sita remains steadfast and usually tries to blame herself instead of Rama for events that cause her suffering and separation from Rama...."(p.76)

THE SETTING

The <u>Iliad</u> and <u>Odyssey</u> take place in real places. Troy's existence has been documented, and there is evidence that Ravana's homeland was Sri Lanka. Rama's journey began in northern India and moved southward. Some think that perhaps the "demons" were the smaller, darker Dravidian aboriginal people of India who were pushed southward by the Aryan invaders, represented by Rama. However, this is speculative. In any event, a map has been provided to indicate Rama's journey, and there are many maps of Odysseus' wanderings which help students place the Greek epics in a geographical location.

Cultural Values Embodied by Characters in the Ramayana and Odyssey: A Comparative Analysis

[Written in conjunction with the unit on this subject developed by Gaynell M. Fuchs.]

Thomas J. Lynn

Note: As the Ramayana in its entirety is an exceedingly long work, one of the several abridged translations will be desirable for a high school classroom (the level for which this analysis is oriented as supporting material). We have used the Willaim Buck version, which, although it is not exacting in its adherence to the letter of the original, is very accessible and adequately mindful of the original's plot events and views.

Introductory Remarks on the Ramayana

The Ramayana is, along with the Mahabharata, one of the two most renowned epic poems of India. Composed in Sanskrit, the original Ramayana is attributed to a sage of ancient India, Valmiki, but there are also later versions of the Ramayana in modern Indian languages. The poem's story and characters continue to have tremendous importance in Indian culture, literature, and religion. Uncertainty exists as to when the earliest version of the epic was composed, but it is often dated to over 2,000 years ago. Scholars have debated whether the Ramayana influenced Homer or Homer influenced the Ramayana. At the center of the Ramayana is Rama, heir to the kingdom of Kosala, and his wife Sita. Rama and Sita, as well as Rama's devoted brother Lakshmana, wander in exile for fourteen years due to a machination at court. During the latter part of this period Sita is abducted and taken to Lanka by Ravana, an exceedingly powerful demon king. A huge army composed of monkeys--most notably great-hearted Hanuman--and bears is assembled to help Rama and Lakshmana defeat Ravana and his forces and recover Sita. In the meantime Sita resists Ravana's advances, but, after Ravana is defeated in single combat with Rama, her purity is questioned and then dramatically vindicated. Afterwards Rama and Sita return to Ayodhya, the capital of Kosala, where he is rightfully crowned, beginning a long rule of great prosperity. In a final section of the poem, one quite possibly of later origin, rumors arise amongst Rama's subjects that Sita was not free from Ravana's touch when she was his captive in Lanka. Rama has her exiled, even though she is pregnant. She has twin sons who, when they are older, go to Ayodhya and impress Rama with their singing. Rama learns they are his sons and he sends for Sita. When she returns she asks at a crowded gathering to be taken in by Mother Earth as a sign of her faithfulness. The earth opens, Mother Earth ascends on her throne, embraces Sita, and they disappear underground.

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Given that scholars began discussing the subject of influence between the Ramayana and the Homeric epics at least as early as the nineteenth century (see Lassen, Lillie, Telang), it goes without saying, that similarities between them have long been noted. There are of course, fundamental differences as well, not only of plot, but of technique (see Nagy). In this discussion, I would like to focus on certain similarities and differences between Rama and Sita and Odysseus and Penelope. To begin we might consider positive characteristics that are commonly identified with Odysseus in his portrayal in the Odyssey (overlapping as it does with his portrayal in the Iliad), and positive characteristics of Rama. The first two passages encompass many of the admirable traits of Odysseus with which we are familiar:

> The tests (including the tests on Ithaka) are passed by the exercise of virtues, viz. (in ascending order) physical courage and strength; ingenuity where these might fail; restraint, patience, tact, and self-control; and the will for home. These are the virtues not of Man, but of a particular valiant, resourceful, much enduring hero, established as such in the Iliad, and developed in [the Odyssey]. (Lattimore 15-16)

> Homer portrayed Odysseus as a man of outstanding wisdom, eloquence, resourcefulness, courage, and endurance. . . . In the Odyssey Odysseus had many opportunities for displaying his talent for ruses and deceptions; but at the same time his courage, loyalty, and magnanimity were constantly attested. (Encyclopaedia Brittanica)

The traits of physical strength, wisdom, magnanimity, and eloquence mentioned in these passages are possessed as well by Rama, as a passage describing him in the Ramayana suggests:

> Rama's nature was quiet and free. . . . He knew when to save and when to spend. He could . . . keep his own counsel. He knew his own faults. . . . He could speak well and reason in a chain of eloquent words. . . . He . . . was an expert archer. . . .
>
> Rama was kind and courteous and never ill. To harsh words he returned no blame. He was warmhearted and generous and a real friend to all. He tried living right. . . . He was a remarkable prince and every Kosala loved him except for five or six fools. He was a quiet strong man. . . . (Valmiki 58-59--all Ramayana page references are to the Buck translation)

For reluctant English students, a teacher would do well to emphasize just how important eloquence and thoughtfulness are to both of these heroes. They are not portrayed as men of few words as some of cinema's macho action heroes are. Their stature is defined to a great extent through such characteristics as the the sway of their personalities, their impressive ability to narrate a good story (see Books IX-XII Of Odyssey, p. 139 of Ramayana), and their perceptive and compelling observations. Odysseus not only speaks to the importance of but demonstrates these characteristics in his reply to Euryalus before entering the Phaeacian games in Book XIII:

> With a black look the nimble-witted Odysseus retorted: "That, sir , was an ugly speech, and you must be a fool to have made it. It shows that we cannot all hope to combine the pleasing qualities of good looks, brains, and eloquence. A quite insignificant-looking fellow may yet be a heaven-born orator watched with delight as he advances confidently and with persuasive modesty from point to point, the one man who stands out in the gathering and is stared at like a god when he passes through the town. Another may be as handsome as an immortal, yet quite deficient in the graceful art of speech. You yourself, sir, present a most distinguished exterior to the world--the gods themselves could not improve it--but you have the brains of a dolt. (Homer 126--all Odyssey page references are to the Rieu translation)

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Athena says to Odysseus, moreover, upon his return to Ithaca, "you have no rival as a statesman and orator." (210). Similarly, at several points in his story Rama speaks with the wisdom of the sages who are so highly regarded in the Ramayana:

> Rama said, "The first betrayal may be easy or it may be hard, but after the first betrayal then the others soon follow. {The heart, Bharata [Rama's brother, who against the commitment of their now dead father to honor the wishes of Bharata's mother, Kaikeyi, wants to give the throne to Rama instead of keeping it himself] . . . keep note of your heart and don't stifle it. There lives the soul, clear, never stained, watching all we do or think to do, so let a man be still and find his heart. That is the only safe rescue. [in these special brackets: can't find in Sen]} What use is a castle or a palace or a great stone fortress that is no defense against Time? . . . While we are together as two men during this lifetime, let us keep the truth." (130)

The various heroic traits of Odysseus and Rama discussed above do not, of course, exist in a vacuum, but are placed in the service of epic undertakings and objectives. And just as we may appreciate more fully Odysseus' traits from the perspective of the Greek heroic ideal (discussed below), we may fruitfully see Rama's characteristics in light of the Indian concept of dharma. In regard to this concept B.A. van Nooten writes:

> The Ramayana epitomizes the spirit of ancient India with its vague but grand concepts of moral rectitude and its consequences for a person's fate. Both Rama and Sita are portrayed as following their dharma, a term meaning "personal duty," as well as "law, eternal law" and personified as the God of Justice. (van Nooten xx)

Rama's adherence to "moral rectitude," and "dharma," is referred to in one of the lines describing him quoted above: "He tried living right. . . . Rama himself speaks of the importance of observing dharma:

> "For every broken promise breaks away a little Dharma, and every break of Dharma brings closer the day the worlds too must break apart. . . . If man breaks his word, why should the stars above keep their promises not to fall? Why should Fire not burn us all or Ocean not leap his shores and drown us?" (80)

Such concentration on "moral rectitude" is a distinguishing trait of Rama's: in a number of instances Rama places "doing the right thing" ahead of what seems to be his own self interest. Early in the story, for example, he sacrifices the throne of Ayodhya to which he is entitled, and which King Dasaratha, his father, and the people of Ayodhya want him to have, to uphold Dasaratha's honor, which one of his wives, Kaikeyi, selfishly tests (see pp. 64 ff.). Of course this is not to say that Odysseus is without moral rectitude, but it is not a subject of such keen concern for him.

Another related difference between Rama and Odysseus concerns honesty. The latter is an inveterate liar, spinning yarns whenever it seems prudent or advantageous to do so; by contrast one character represents Rama's foremost virtue thus: "If Rama says something to me I can believe it" (62). Still, Odysseus' dissemblings enable him to achieve his objectives, which is why "cunning" may be considered one of his traits, and, in fact, these dissemblings seem to be admired by his his divine patron, Athena:

> The bright-eyed goddess smiled at Odysseus' tale and caressed him with her hand. . . .
> "What a cunning knave it would take," she said, "to beat you at your tricks! Even a god would be hard put to it.

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> "And so my stubborn friend, Odysseus the arch-deceiver, with his craving for intrigue, does not propose even in his own country to drop his sharp practice and the lying tales that he loves from the bottom of his heart. But no more of this: we are both adepts in chicane. For in the world of men you have no rival as a statesman and orator, while I am pre-eminent among the gods for invention and resource." (210)

Athena's approval here and continuous assistance of Odysseus are further indications that within his cultural context Odysseus' behavior is worthy of esteem. We may make the same inference about Rama from the aid he is given throughout the Ramayana from divine beings representing the forces of good--when for example, Indra, the king of heaven, in order to assist Rama in his battle with Ravana, the Rakshasa (demon) king, sends him his chariot and Matali, the heavenly charioteer (341). The point that can, I believe, be fairly made from these considerations is that it is possible to see Odysseus, like Rama, as an epic hero following his dharma.

Their dharmas, moreover, correspond in some remarkable ways. At some point each encompasses reuniting with their wives, attacking their wives' tormentors, returning home, and assuming rule and thereby restoring affairs and authority to their proper order in their domains. These undertakings could not be accomplished without the practical skills and moral responsiveness befitting great heroes. For the path of dharma often challenges an individual's finest resources, moral and physical. Odysseus and Rama must not only vanquish the enemy--the suitors in the case of Odysseus, and Ravana in the case of Rama--they must also make difficult choices, ones often fraught with moral, spiritual, and emotional dilemmas, including the competing claims of various duties and great temptations. As the Ramayana observes, "the Dharma Law is difficult to know" (392). Rama must choose between enjoying the throne of Ayodhya and living the life of a forest ascetic for fourteen years, although the latter entails forsaking other obligations, such as to the people of Ayodhya, who want him to be their ruler, and to members of his family who he leaves behind. And years later, when he is king and there are invidious rumors circulating about his wife Sita's fidelity when she was Ravana's captive, Rama must choose between ignoring the rumors and exiling her for many years to keep the integrity of his rule above suspicion and reproach, despite the fact that her innocence was established immediately after Ravana's death (364), and that she is pregnant. Odysseus must choose between Calypso's offer of immortality and returning to his wife Penelope, and between abstaining from or eating in his hunger, as his men do, the Sun god's cattle.

The virtues of Penelope and Sita tend to be viewed in contrast to those of their husbands, consisting mainly in their beauty and devotion and fidelity to their husbands, rather than being of an active nature. But as will be seen both Penelope and Sita demonstrate active heroism as well. Moreover, in sustaining their fidelity they too make difficult and admirable choices. Penelope's loyalty to her husband, absent for nearly twenty years and very possibly dead, demands that she resist the temptation of taking another husband. Furthermore, it seems likely that she is consciously circumventing worse violence from the suitors than they are engaged in. If she marries one she may incur the wrath of others; yet categorically rejecting the whole lot of them could also arouse their fury. She may also want to marry one of them eventually if Odysseus is dead. Thus, prudently, she neither accepts their offers nor dashes their hopes, indeed fosters them to an extent (39). In the process she devises and engages in her weaving stratagem (39-40), revealing a shrewdness we tend to associate with Odysseus. In fact, Antinous refers to her as "an incomparable schemer" (39), a term that might well be used for Odysseus (compare it to terms in Athena's speech quoted above).

Similarly, in the section of the Ramayana which depicts the forest wanderings of Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana, there is a remarkable passage in which Sita challenges the necessity of Rama involving himself in violent activity against the Rakshasas, the race of demons. She reveals here a

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depth of intellect and judgment that is overshadowed by concentration on her wifely devotion and beauty, and by the fact that it is nearly always male characters in the Ramayana who display sagacity:

> Rama and Sita and Lakshmana left the Valakhilyas [tiny holy beings] and went along south for awhile, and Sita said, "We are not forest people. Do not carry war with you; in Ayodhya once again become a warrior. Don't let desire make you do wrong, do not kill demons without cause for war. I have heard that Lord Indra, when he envies the merit won by an ascetic, will take on the guise of a warrior, and go into the forest, and leave his fine sword with the hermit for safekeeping, and go away. So the ascetic will keep by him a sword sharpened only to kill men. Then he will begin to carry it with him when going from home. Then he will one day draw it. He will kill."
>
> Rama said, "I won't start any war."
>
> "How can you tell?" asked Sita. "Discard Agastya's [a forest saint] arrows. After all these years we do not need them to hunt our food, and they are meant only for killing demons. Do not carry war with you, or by small degrees your mind will alter."
>
> Rama said, "Princess, war is within us, it's nothing outside. No warrior neglects his weapons. He never gives them up. It is a shame to me that those saints must seek my protection that should be theirs without asking. Sita, while he may a warrior like other men enjoys peace, but misfortune and peril make him flame up in anger and resist."
>
> "How can you tell what is right?" asked Sita. "You are only doing what you like."
>
> Rama said, "Dharma leads to happiness, but happiness cannot lead to Dharma. There is some reason for all this. The Valakhilyas have great power, yet they have done nothing against Ravana. The Demon King must surely have some strong defense that can't be broken by their merit, or they could all by themselves easily destroy all Khara's [a Rakshasa commander] soldiers and suffer no loss doing it." (144-45)

I do not, however, wish to diminish how admirable Sita's and Penelope's firm devotion to their husbands is, especially given the context of these epics. In both there are suggestions that the lack of marital devotion leads to disaster. Ravana is told more then once to be content with the wives he already has and not to abduct Sita, that otherwise he and his Rakshasas will be devastated (see, for example, 163-64); and Sita is exposed to abduction by him partly because Queen Kaikeyi insisted against her husband's dearest wishes that Rama be exiled. Reference is made almost at the beginning of the Odyssey to Agamemnon's murder at the hands of his wife and her lover; and Agamemnon's ghost reminds Odysseus in Book XI that it was for the sake of an unfaithful wife, Helen, that so many died in the war from which Odysseus is trying to return home. What is ironic from a modern perspective (and very likely from Homer's as well, although not necessarily that of Homer's audience) is that while Penelope is admired as a paragon of marital fidelity, fending off a horde of suitors, Odysseus, who undoubtedly loves Penelope, is unfaithful to her at least twice on his journey home to her--on the islands of Circe and Calypso. This may be contrasted with Rama's evident fidelity to Sita (despite his exile of her, mentioned above, in the final problematic section of the story). His devotion to her is evident--for example, "He loved Sita well; he lived his life for the sake of her being a part of it" (59)--and may also be reflected in the fact that unlike his father he never takes another wife. This devotion is fitting in a work that extols faithfulness throughout, perhaps more so than any other quality. One cannot help be moved by, for example, the unwavering loyalty to Rama of Lakshmana, Hanuman (the monkey general), and all the other animals and beings who commit themselves to Rama and his cause.

In fact, there tends to be more importance and honor assigned to the array of characters who support Rama than those who support Odysseus. Whereas a network of allies make significant decisions and take vital action on Rama's behalf, emphasis is placed on Odysseus's resourcefulness and boldness as an individual. This is in keeping with the emphasis on individual worth that is a

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core feature of the Greek heroic ideal, an ideal exemplified in the Homeric epics. On this subject, C.M. Bowra writes that the Greeks

> formed a vision of a heroic world which they cherished as one of their most precious possessions. From it they derived the notion that a man should live for honour and renown and play his part with style and proper pride among men as notable as himself. They knew of all this through a long tradition of poetry. . . . For us this tradition survivies in the Homeric poems, which came indeed towards its end but kept its authentic spirit in their generous outlook and strong sense of human worth. Since they were from an early time the staple of Greek education, they encouraged a conception of manhood in which personal worth held pride of place. . . . The individualism, which conditions imposed on Greek life, suited its inherited cult of heroic manhood and endured in historical times as one of the most stiking elements in its beliefs and its behaviour. (Bowra 32)

Sita's devotion to Rama, like Penelope's to Odysseus, manifests itself not only in the rejection of overtures from other men, but in physical and mental action. She willingly sacrifices the life of comfort amongst the royal family to wander fourteen years with him in the forest, asserting her prerogative to do so in another exchange with Rama that bespeaks her self-possession and intellectual sophistication and agility:

> Rama went alone to Sita and said, "The time will quickly pass, you will soon see me return."
>
> She answered softly, "It is very strange, My Lord, that you alone among all men in the world have not heard that a wife and her husband are one."
>
> "There is no happiness in the forest," said Rama. "There is danger. Lions roar and keep pitiless watch from the mouths of their hill-caves, waterfalls crash and pain the ears, and so the wood is full of misery."
>
> "Surely your fortune is also mine," said Sita.
>
> "Enraged elephants in their fury trample men to death."
>
> "Kings in cities execute their faithful friends at any hour, day or night."
>
> "There is little to eat but windfallen fruit and white roots."
>
> "I will eat after you have taken your share of them."...
>
> "Scorpions sting and poison the blood; there is fever in the air, fires rage uncontrolled; there are no dear friends nearby, and so the wood is full of misery."
>
> "It is Ayodhya that would be the wilderness for me without you," said Sita. "Your bow is no decoration, your knife is not for wood-chopping, your arrows are not toys, but keep me from your arguments. We will be together. The water will be nectar, the thistles silk, the raw hides many-colored blankets."...
>
> "Then come," smiled Rama. "You love me and I love you, what more is there?" (73-74).

In the Odyssey there may be another vivid example of poised and agile thought and action on the part of Penelope, in addition to her weaving stratagem and her ability to keep the passions of the suitors in check. Robert Fitzerald argues quite persuasively in his commentary at the end of his translation of the Odyssey that Penelope may well suspect that the old beggar in her house in the latter part of the poem is Odysseus in disguise. Thus, in proposing the contest of the bow, and urging that the old beggar be allowed a turn, she has arranged for Odysseus to have the instrument with which he will begin his assault on the suitors (Books XIX, XXI):

> It is Penelope who insists at the crucial moment that the beggar be given a try at the bow; she all but literally places it in his hands. I conclude that for the last and greatest of Odysseus' feats of arms his wife is as responsible as he is. (Fitzgerald 503 [Fitzgerald

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acknowledges that "part of my argument was anticipated by Professor [Philip Whaley] Harsh in the American Journal of Philology, Vol. 71 (1950)."])

A fascinating resemblance exists between the contest of the bow that Penelope proposes and the bow contest by which Rama wins the right to marry Sita. Penelope declares:

> "I intend shortly to propose a trial of strength, using the very axes which he (Odysseus) sometimes set up here at home, twelve in a row like the props under a new keel. Standing a good way off, he could shoot an arrow through them all. And now I am going to make the Suitors compete in the same test of skill. Whichever proves the handiest at stringing the bow and shoots an arrow through each of the twelve axes, with that man I will go, bidding goodbye to this house that welcomed me as a bride." (303)

Sita's father, King Janaka, says,

> "Long since did Shiva give me that heavenly bow," said the King. "To bend Shiva's Bow is the dowry [in this case related to an archaic meaning of the word, "gift given to or for a wife" (Webster's)] of my daughter Sita, whose mother is Prithivi, the goddess Earth. . . . You must understand," said Janaka, "that Sita has the final consent. Others have come; none could even lift this bow. I have passed them by." (53-54)

Rama lifts the bow and strings it.

> Then he drew it so strongly that it broke in two above the grip. . . .
> Janaka shook his head. "Who would have believed?" He helped his minister [who had fallen from the noise of the cracking bow] to rise." Ask Sita." (55)

These bow contests represent the perfection of the union of Odysseus and Penelope and Rama and Sita. Clearly Odysseus and Rama are the only men capable of passing the tests with the respective bows, and thus, as the most worthy men, which their feats of strength represent, are the most appropriate husbands for the most worthy of women, which Penelope's and Sita's beauty and fidelity represent (although Sita's fidelity is not demonstrated until later).

Professor I. N. Choudhuri, Secretary of the National Academy of Letters of India, refers to traditional views that identify two aspects of the human being--dark and light and yin and yang--in commenting on the complementary relationship of Rama and Sita; in keeping with these views, he suggests, we must see Rama and Sita not as separate, but always together. In fact Sita herself says, in a passage quoted above, "a wife and her husband are one" (73), and, besides being applicable to her and Rama, Homer may have this thought in mind in his portrayal of the relationship between Penelope and Odysseus.

In his chapter entitled "Sita," David Kinsley relates Sita's own enactments of the idea that husband and wife merge their separate selves, to traditional Hindu expectations of women. Kinsley observes that a woman is taught to submerge her own identity in that of her husband, and of others:

> In the Hindu tradition a woman is taught to understand herself primarily in relation to others. She is taught to emphasize in the development of her character what others expect of her. It is society that puts demands on her, primarily through the agents of relatives and in-laws, and not she who places demands on society that she be allowed to develop a unique, independent destiny. A central demand placed on women, particularly vis-à-vis males, is that they subordinate their welfare to the welfare of others. Hindu women are taught to cultivate an attitude that identifies their own welfare with the welfare of others, especially that of their husbands and children. (77)

> Sita's self-effacing nature, her steadfast loyalty to her husband, and her chastity make her both the ideal Hindu wife and the ideal pativrata ["the wife devoted entirely to her husband"]. In a sense Sita has no independent existence, no independent destiny. In all things she sees herself as inextricably bound up with Rama. Apart from him her life is meaningless. (76)

Paradoxically, however, Sita does exert an independence of mind when she insists that she and Rama belong together and that she will join him for the 14 year forest exile. She does so as well when she urges Rama to avoid violence. (See dialogues between them above.)

Kinsley assigns blame to Rama for what is seen by many as an undesirable consequence of a woman's complete submission to a man: the man taking advantage of the woman:

> Although Rama is considered the ideal king, he is not a very goood husband to Sita. He would be perfectly willing to leave her behind for fourteen years during his exile, he entertains doubts about her chastity while she was under Ravana's control, he allows her to undergo an ordeal by fire, he exiles her from his kingdom to stop the gossip of the citizens and to protect his own reputation, and finally he demands that she undergo a public ordeal. Throughout all this Sita remains steadfast and usually tries to blame herself instead of Rama for events that cause her suffering and separation from Rama. . . . Thus when Ravana shows Sita Rama's [illusory] head and bow, she immediately blames herself. Although she cannot remember being faithless in act or thought, she assumes that she must have been at some time (perhaps in a past life) in order for Rama to meet such an untimely end. It does not occur to her that some fault of Rama's own might have led to his misfortune. (Kinsley 76)

Kinsley phrase, "some fault of Rama's," and assertion that Rama "is not a very good husband to Sita" deserve consideration. Neither Rama nor Odysseus are portrayed as absolutely perfect men. Odysseus gives way, for example, to pride and anger in announcing his name to the Cyclops, Polyphemus, which results in a protracted punishment for Odysseus by the Cyclops' father, Poseidon (153-54). This punishment delays for years Odysseus's return to Ithaca. Rama, in addition to the shortcomings as a husband to which Kinsley refers, is lured into trying to capture a beautiful apparition of a deer for Sita, despite knowing that it might be a Rakshasa illusion, which results in giving Ravana the opportunity to abduct the unattended Sita (166 ff.). And he "murder[s]" (198) "from ambush" (246) the monkey king, Vali, with whom he has had no personal quarrel. (See also 196, 375 concerning his killing of Vali.) The poets depict, in short, protagonists who reflect our own humanity, including our fallibility.

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I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Gaynell Fuchs, who also having taught the Odyssey at the ninth grade level, proposed following a classroom study of Odysseus and Penelope with a study of Rama and Sita and their embodiment of Indian cultural values. The topic of this essay was suggested by that proposal.

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GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR THE RAMAYANA

I PAGES 1-8

1. From page 1, what kind of person is Rama? Support your opinion from the description in the text.

2. On page 2 Sita argues with rama that she be allowed to go with him into exile. (Remember, Sita is the eiptome of the faithful wife who sacrifices her own safety and comfort for her husband's.) Notice how she answers his arguments. Which of her reasons for accompanying Rama do you like best? Why?

3. At the top of page 3, the sage Vasishtha praises Sumantra the charioteer. What do we learn about his dharma (duty) from the italics?

4. On page 4 the wanderers encounter Guha, the Hunter King. On a piece of plain paper, draw him and his outfit. OR, if you do not wish to draw, make a list of his clothing,jewelry,etc.

5. Why does Guha say he prefers to live in the forest? What do you feel about his reason?

6. On the bottom of page 5 Rama instructs the charioteer to return to his father, the king, to assure him that the exiles are safe. What quality of the Greek epic hero does Rama display here?

7. On pages 6-8 the woods are described. Trees are personified on page 7, and the sun, moon and night on page 8. Which descriptions of the area appeal to you especially. Why?

8. Comparison: On page 5 we learn about smoking,drinking and eating. If Guha were living in pre-contact Hawaii, what would he be eating? Drinking?

II DANDAKA FOREST (pages 8-14)

1. Agastya gives Rama a gift. What is it?

2. When Agastya asks the group to stay, Rama refuses. What is his reason?

3. At the bottom of page 9, Agastya tells Rama, "Demons do not love men, therefore men must love each other." How does this compare with Christian values? OR Explain what the sentence means.

4. On page 10 the poet describes Dandaka. Which part of the description is most frightening to you? Why? OR Draw the forest on plain white paper.

5. On page 11, Sita urges Rama to put away his weapons and not to start a fight. Do you agree with her reasoning. Why or why not?

6. What qualities of the eipc hero are revealed in Rama's answer?

7. How do you think Odysseus would have answered?

8. Surpanakha cannot have Rama so she looks at his brother. Note his humorous response before he becomes angry. What does Lakshmana do?

9. Notice how Surpanakha reflects an entirely different view of war from Sita. How does she "con" her brother into becoming angry enough to wage war against Rama?

10. From the information on pages 13-14, describe Ravana.

III THE GOLDEN DEER (pages 15-19)

1. Maricha is Ravana's uncle. Clearly he fears Rama but he does decide to help Ravana. How does he decide to disguise himself? OR: On plain white paper, draw him in this disguise.

2. The golden deer tempts Rama to leave Sita. Just before he is killed, how does Maricha trick Rama?

3. Sita angers Lakshmana. Of what does she accuse him?

4. When Ravana enters Sita's area, she steps outside the circle and offers Ravana water. How is this similar to Greek custom?

5. As Sita is captured and carried away, why does she drop her jewelry?

IV HANUMAN (Pages 19-21)

1. On page 19, the most important Hindu gods see what is going on. Brahma is like Zeus and Indra is another very important god. When he goes to Sita, what does he bring to her and how does she receive him?

2. How does Rama find out that Sita is still alive?

3. Who helps Rama?

V. SITA'S RESCUE (pages 22-28)

1. Hanunman and his brother, the monkey king, go to Lanka to find where Sita is. Remembering that this epic was written about 2,000 years ago, read the description of the earth as it looks from space. How did Valmiki's concept of earth differ from ours?
OR, on plain white paper, draw what the earth looks like from the description.

2. Hanuman and his army come to Lanka. this is the home of Ravana, and a beautiful city, we are told. On page 24. the city is personified. Can you visualize the description in a picture?
OR Write the part of the description which appeals to you the most and explain your choice.

3. Why does Hanuman disguise himself as a cat?

4. Lanka, who now becomes an ugly woman, challenges Hanuman. How does he manage to get by her and into the city?

5. When Sita does not want to believe Hanuman has seen Rama, of whom does she remind us? Why?

6. Sita tells Hanuman that her troubles are her own fault. She then refuses Hanuman's offer to take her away and says she will wait for Rama himself to save her. Hanuman prepares to leave, but an inspiration strikes him? What action does he take? Why does he do this?

7. Sita gives Hanuman something when he leaves. What is it?

VI THE SIEGE OF LANKA (p.29-
1. What happened in the first skirmish?

2. What keeps Kumbhakarna alive despite Rama's attack? What do we learn about human nature from this account?

3. What does the poet mean when he says, "He took...bows <u>as hard to stretch as the mind</u>"?

4. Notice the description of Ravana's heads. What do the golden arrows do to them?

5. Rama, like Odysseus, receives supernatural help. What comes to Rama's aid?

6. On page 34, Rama helps Matali. Matali also helps Rama to kill Ravana. How?

7. What do you think happened to Ravana and his demons?

9. What happened to Matali and the god Indra's chariot?

VII HERE'S LOVE (p. 35-37)

1. When Hanuman comes to Sita to tell her that they have won, what does she promise will be Hanuman's future?

2. Sita asks that the race of demons be pardoned. What does this tell us about her as a person?

VIII THE WONDERFUL RETURN (p. 38-

1. Draw a picture of the thrones on white paper.

2. Note the gifts which dare given to Rama by the virgin girls and the Ayodhya girls. What might they symbolize?

NOTE: In some versions of the Ramayana, the people of the kingdom doubted that Sita had been faithful to Rama while she was in Ravana's kingdom. She sets herself on fire to prove her innocense but the god of fire, Agni, protects her from burning and returns her to Rama. She never complains at being criticized by the people, or Rama's doubt. Later on, again Rama doubts her innocence and sends her away with their twin sons. The epic was supposedly written for them by Valmiki, the sage who protected her in the forest.

3. What do you think a modern Sita would do if her honor were questioned?

4. How do you feel about Rama at this point in the story? Do you feel he was perhaps also a victim of his society? Why or why not?

VOCABULARY FOR THE RAMAYANA

eloquent (p. 1)
hospitable (p. 1)
enraged (p. 2)
wayfarer (p. 2)
ascetics (p. 2)
hermit (p. 2)
invoke (p. 3)
outcast (p. 4)
plaintively (p. 7)
rills (p. 7)
infallible (p. 8)
guise (p. 11)
mantra (p. 13)
illusion (p. 16)
treacherous (p. 17)
perilous (p. 18)
sullen (p. 30)
resonant (p. 33)
mace (p. 33)
solstice (p. 35)
cordially (p. 35)

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE RAMAYANA UNIT

1.. DUE
Following the method of argument which Sita uses with Rama on page 2, write a short dialogue (4 exchanges) between you and your parent(s), expressing your feelings about the benefit of attending a rock concert, pursuing a dangerous sport, etc. Your parent(s) will represent the negative side.

2. DUE
Discuss what you would serve in your own home for visiting dignitaries? What entertainment would you provide? Would it be served indoors, outdoors, etc.?

3. DUE
Complete the simile, metaphors (positive and negative) and the personification which you worked on in class today. Also, draw Guha with all his costume/jewelry/weapons.

4. DUE
Write at least a page about one of the following:
a. Has a friend ever put himself/herself in danger for your sake?
b. Have you ever put yourself at risk to help someone in trouble?
c. Ask your parents if either of them have ever had such an experience (either helping or being helped) and write about it.

5. DUE
Draw either a representation of earth from space as it is described, or Lanka from the description

6 DUE
Review class activity on comparison between Odysseus and Rama, Sita and Penelope. List 3 differences and 3 traits which the characters have in common.

7 DUE
Choose one simile, one metaphor and one personification from the class work today and explain why you chose these favorites.

Each of these assignments will be worth 10 points. You should also write answers to the group study questions as we go over them in class.

There will be one test at the end of the unit and some quizzes along the way.

SOME WRITING TOPICS

1. The story lends itself to short descriptive writing assignments.
Students might be asked to produce a paragraph about their own locale. First, a personification of an area known to them, then a positive metaphor and a negative one could be added. Students thus learn the importance of figurative language in presenting mood or attitudes.

What sort of food would you find in the forest of your locale? What kind of banquet could you prepare for visiting dignitaries who might drop in to your home?

Following the method of argument which Sita uses with Rama on page 2, write a short dialogue with your parent, expressing the benefits of attending a rock concert, or pursuing a dangerous sport, etc., while the parent represents the negative view.

Has a friend ever put him/herself in danger for your sake, as Hanuman does for Rama and Sita? Write about the incident. Or, have you ever been a Hanuman? Write about it.

Compare Rama's military expertise with Odysseus'.

Compare Sita and Penelope as ideal wives. Are there any shortcomings in their roles? Do you think this faithfulness is realistic or admirable? Why or why not?

Could Hanuman be an epic hero in his own right? Why or why not?
We know that Odysseus had faults. Discuss what is imperfect about Rama.
Suppose Rama and Odysseus met at some point. What do you think they would talk about and why?

What points do the heroic code of <u>aidos</u> and <u>kudos</u> and <u>dharma</u> have in common? Discuss in relation to the two heroes.
Suppose Odysseus and Rama were suddenly transported to our time period. What would they have done about Saddam Hussein,for example?

Odysseus and Rama were helped by the supernatural, and what we might consider "magic." What kind of aid does the modern hero have in the struggle to achieve goals?

Do some research on some aspect of Indian society which interests you.

OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

From the descriptive passages you have read, produce some illustrations for the <u>Ramayana.</u> Ravana, Sita and Rama, Hanuman or some of the forest scenes come to mind.

TELLING THE STORY TO OTHERS

As part of this unit, you will become teachers, presenting the story of the Ramayana to other students. You will be working in small groups in order to do this.

THE HERO

1. So far, we have decided on the heroic characteristics Rama reveals. We know he is brave, physically capable, intelligent and crafty, ("kudos"). He is concerned about his friends and family, loves his wife dearly and is faithful, helps the helpless and respects the elderly and the gods (aidos).

THE HEROINE

We have also seen that Sita represents an intelligent,faithful and loving wife. Not only does she love Rama, but she is opposed to bloodshed and is forgiving.

THE CULTURE

We have found many clues to Indian culture and can compare/contrast those with ancient Greece as well as our own Hawaiian and contemporary cultures.

THEMES

We have discussed themes in the Ramayana:

faithfulness
love (both marital and societal)
good overcomes evil

With these facts in mind, plus the story itself, our job is to make an interesting and informative presentation for our peers.

1. First, in your group, go over the handouts which summarize the information on the hero, culture and themes.
2. Think what you might like to do to present the Ramayana.
   What aspects of the Ramayana do you want to present?
   What do you think would interest your peers?
   Do you want to compare/contrast with Odysseus? Today?
   What do you think are the reasons the story is still so popular in SE Asia and India today?

Come up with a plan for a presentation:
   Skit, Drawings, Conversation, Question and Answer session,
   Props? Costumes? Script?
   Who will do the talking/acting?
   Do you want to do this as a small group or do you want to make it an all class project?

To earn the points (50) for this week, you will need to do the following:
GROUP: 26 points

1. Hand in a daily log of what you talked about. Appoint a recorder for each day.
2. Work on the final product
   Hand in a list of which person is responsible for what.

INDIVIDUAL: 24 points (4 nights @ 6 pts.)

1. Keep a log each night of approx. I page explaining your feelings about what went on that day in class...questions you might have, your reaction to working in your group, your responsibility for tomorrow. THIS WILL NOT BE SHARED WITH ANYONE BUT ME...I WILL BE LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE OF SOME INVOLVEMENT IN THE GROUP PROCESS AND SOME INTELLIGENT RESPONSES!

   The log will be due on Monday, March 16 and no late work will be accepted.

This 50 points will be included on your 4th quarter grade.

COMPOSITION TOPICS FOR THE RAMAYANA

Your essay should be at least two pages long and must give enough information to reveal the characters and to defend your point of view. You may bring the rough draft to the exam with you. The final copy must be done in ink.

1. Rama and Odysseus meet. They are elderly men at this point. Odysseus is King of Ithaca and Rama is in charge of Ayodhya. In a conversation, they discuss their strong and weak points as role models for their cultures. You will need to include what you consider to be both negative and positive aspects of their behavior in their conversation. You are not judging, but are reporting what you think they would say about their lives. Write in dialog form. (Before you start their conversation, set the scene .)

2. Penelope and Sita are elderly women. they reflect on their experiences, mentioning what they feel most rewarding about their lives and loves. They also give important advice to young women who are about to become wives. Again, they reveal the ideals of their culture, and, they may not agree on all points, remember! (Before you start the conversation, set the scene).

3. You are a professor of Anthropology, interested in how cultures are similar in various parts of the world. With you knowledge of Indian, Greek and Hawaiian culture, make some comparisons and contrasts about values and the daily life of the people. You might include information on the structure of the society, religious and social ceremonies and customs, what is expected of a citizen, the essentials of food,clothing,shelter. Do not discuss all of these points! Choose what you feel you can give the best analysis and details.

4. You are one who likes to champion the underdog. You feel that Rama has been given too much praise for his role and you would like to put forth a case for Lakshmana. Write the letter you would send to WHO'S WHO IN THE HERO WORLD explaining why you think Lakshmana should be included in the next volume.

RAMAYANA SIMILES,METAPHORS,PERSONIFICATIONS

On the land there was a clearing surrounded by deep green banyan trees with red fruit like heaps of emeralds mixed with rubies. (6)

...there many saints had had as wite as skulls....(6)

Clear rivers and little streams flowed down from him like graceful braids. (7)

The morning sun, like a man newly rich, shone too proud over the forest. (10)

Their branches were twisted like the crooked hearts of evil men. (10)

Her yellowy skin was rutted like a bad road and she had ears like flat baskets...(11)

Her claws curved like elephant hooks. She floung up her arms and fell at Khara's feet like a stone falling from the blue sky. ('12)

She grabbed Ravana's legs in a grip like an iron vise. (13)

They danced in his heads like fiery coals. (13)

I see him, dressed like the trees in bark...(15)

Ravana came boldly across the clearing with the disguise of a holy man, like a treacherous deep well covered and hidden by tall grass. (17)

Her yellow scarf flashed down like lightning. (19)

She was like a wheel, and her cities were like small golden coins and her rivers were crossing like threads. Her meadows were tiny patches, the Vindhya and Himalya Hills all covered with rocks looked like elephants in a pond as they rose from the flat earth.

They shook out the tents of travelers as if they were cleaning rugs...They reattled the caravan wagons like dice....(23)

His twenty arms like gate pillars...he was sleeping like a deep breathing hill...(26)

She is somewhere faint and forlorn as the misty Moon, hard to see as a streak of gold covered by dust, hard to find as a bright yellow reed broken grey in the frosty wind and lost when winter comes, fading away as the red scar from a new arrow wound, from the fresh cut of some sharp heavenly weapon..." (27)

Sita was both happy and sad, like rain in the sunshine. (27)

Rama is like a fire temple, burning from his own fires within. (27)

Her sadness had come and gone as clouds will show across the clear night skies and cover the moonlight and go again. (28)

Hanuman was off like a bolt from a bowstring. (28)

He wore robes like fame and glory,adorned with rubies red as blood...(29)

The Rakshasas on the Lanka walls sighed like the long traveling wind storming in from off the sea. (29)

They chopped them up with captured axes like firewood. (29)

The gate snapped shut like a trap. (29)

He will scrape up the little animals and swallow them like grains of rice. (30)

Earth swayed and lurched like a swing. (30)

He fell like a mountain falling flat upon the world. (32)

he saw the moving ends of Rama's bow like waving torchlights in the darkness. (32)

Rama's arrow heads with sharp heads and even knots flew howling like hurricanes. (33)

Hanuman...your good words and love are rare and precious jewels...It's like finding a lost way, like lighting a lamp in the dark, like picking up what's fallen down or showing what's been hidden. (36)(

Rama came out like a lion coming out of his cave. (39)

The necklace seemed to glow like little moons...(39)

Men resorted to him from all over the earth as rivers resort to the sea. (40)

METAPHORS

His face was living blue sapphire..his antlers were ivory tipped with moonstone points, his hooves glassy black flint. His lighted eyes were amethyst. (15)

Her silver ornaments were tyhe Moon and white stars dropping...19

Ah you are the Moon and the Sun, Hanuman said to R and L.

He was a fire not burning, an ocean still with no tides. 35

PERSONIFICATIONS

Chitakuta Hill..standing alone and towering above them, engarlanded by his own flowering woods thick with flowers of red and gold and blue and white...He had crags and ridges, round stones and giant boulders. through his stone ran veins of black and yellow and silver colored ore. he was alive with singing birds. He was like the garden of the gods...(7)

the loving embrace of blue evening made even the sun renounce the heavens and leave the sky.

From all sides came the enveloping dark veils of Lady Night...

The sky slowly turned above with stars for her bright open eyes and the splendid mild beaming moon rose....p. 8

...brush cried out underfoot...screams from the lines of dead whistling canes were heard...(10_

the glorious sun, who every day looks down upon our world, this time dimmed his light from the sadness of what he saw._ 18

NAME_____

THE RAMAYANA TEST

Honor Code:_____

MATCHING: Match the name of the character with the description/quotation.

_____"He fell like a mountain falling flat on the world."

_____ "He was a quiet strong man. He could bend iron in his hand or fix a bird's broken wing. "

_____ "Men are driven mad by too many laws and rules. Freedom for me!"

_____ "Not a hair out of place! I'm ready to do it again! I call that ocean a little puddle!"

_____ ""Her silver ornaments were the Moon and White stars falling."

_____ "He was a fire not burning, an ocean still with no tides."

_____ "Her yellowy skin was rutted like a bad road and she had ears like flat baskets."

_____ "She was like a wheel, and her cities were like small golden coins and her rivers were crossing like threads....the hills with rocks looked like elephants in a pond as they rose from the flat earth."

_____ "His face was living blue sapphire...his ant lers were ivory tipped with moonstone points, his hooves glassy black flint...."

_____ "Rama, of the war -chariots, take from me this sweet-sounding bow in exchange for your old one, and take this arrow."

Agastya earth Guha Hanuman Kumbhakarna Lakshmana Lanka Maricha Rama Ravana Sita Surpanakha

SHORT ANSWERS:

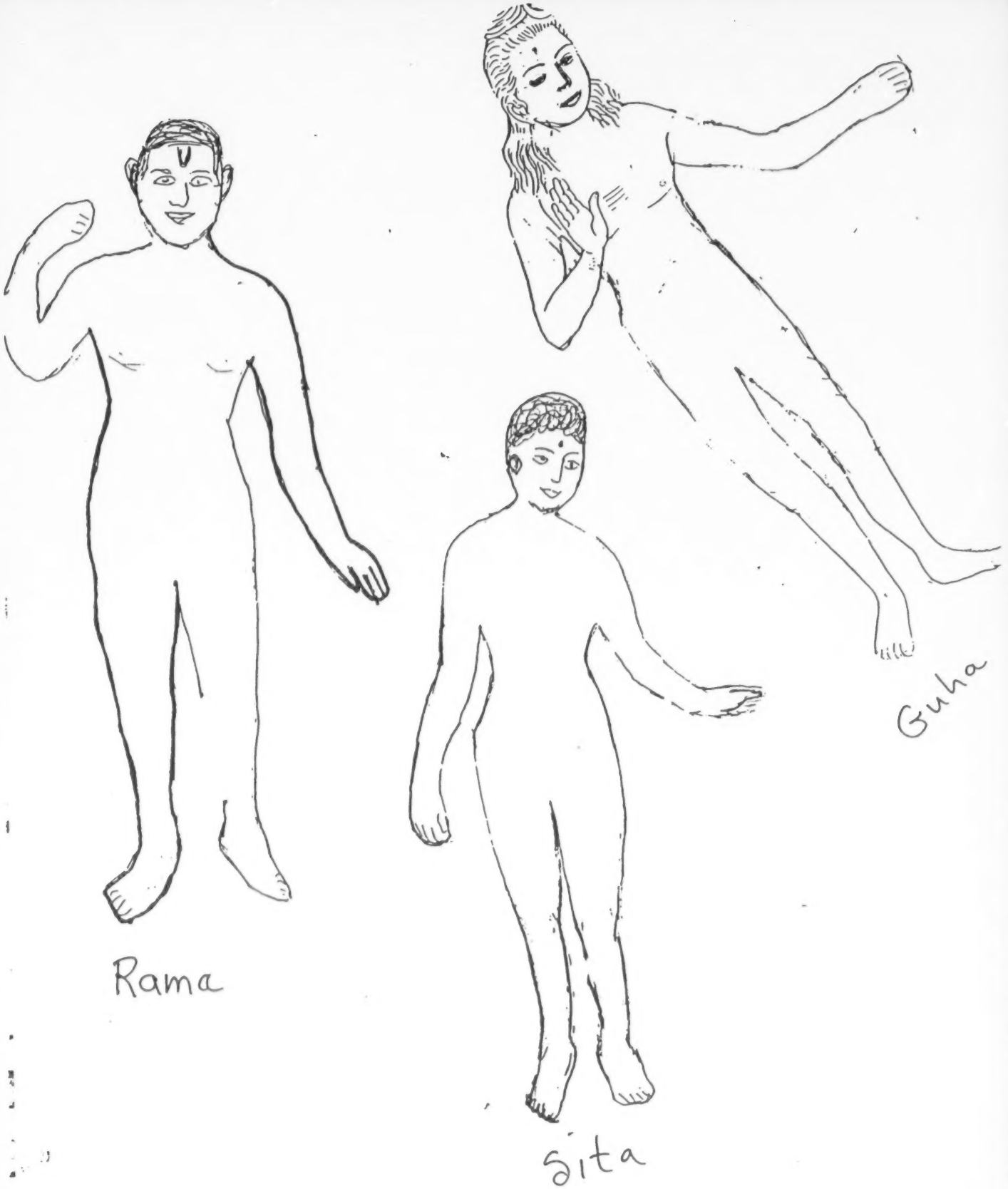
1. Create a metaphor or simile which gives a mental picture of one of the main characters in the Ramayana. OR write a personification of a <u>place</u> we read about. These should be more than a one sentence effort...think of the personification of Chikrakutya Hill or some of the descriptive passages about the main characters which were pointed out.

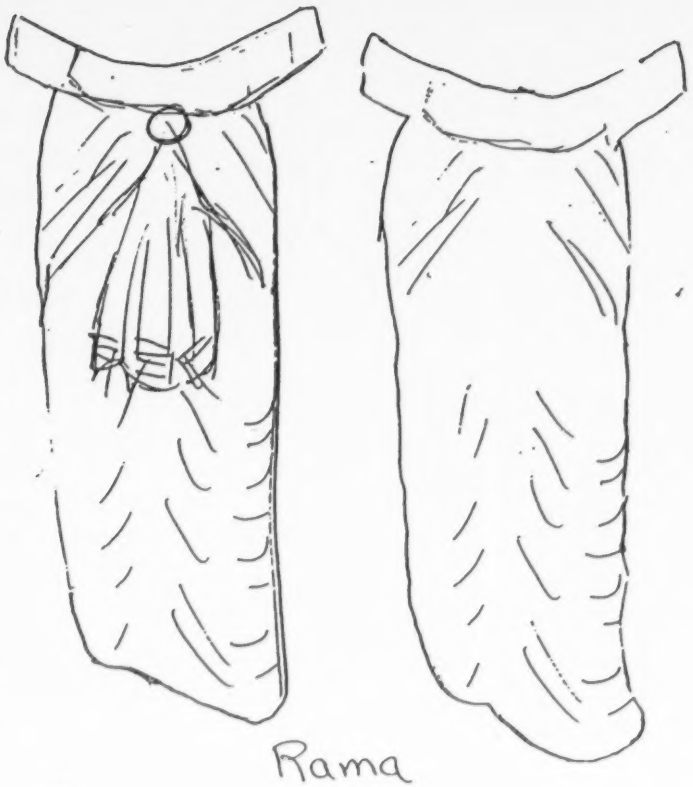
2. Explain something which Rama did which shows his respect for the gods.

3. Give an example of something Rama did which showed his extraordinary physical strength and ability.

4. Name three animals from whom Rama and Lakshmana and Sita received help. and tell briefly what each animal did.

5. Discuss one cultural idea which you learned from reading the RAMAYANA. Explain how this idea is similar or different from our own culture today.


Rama
Guha
Sita

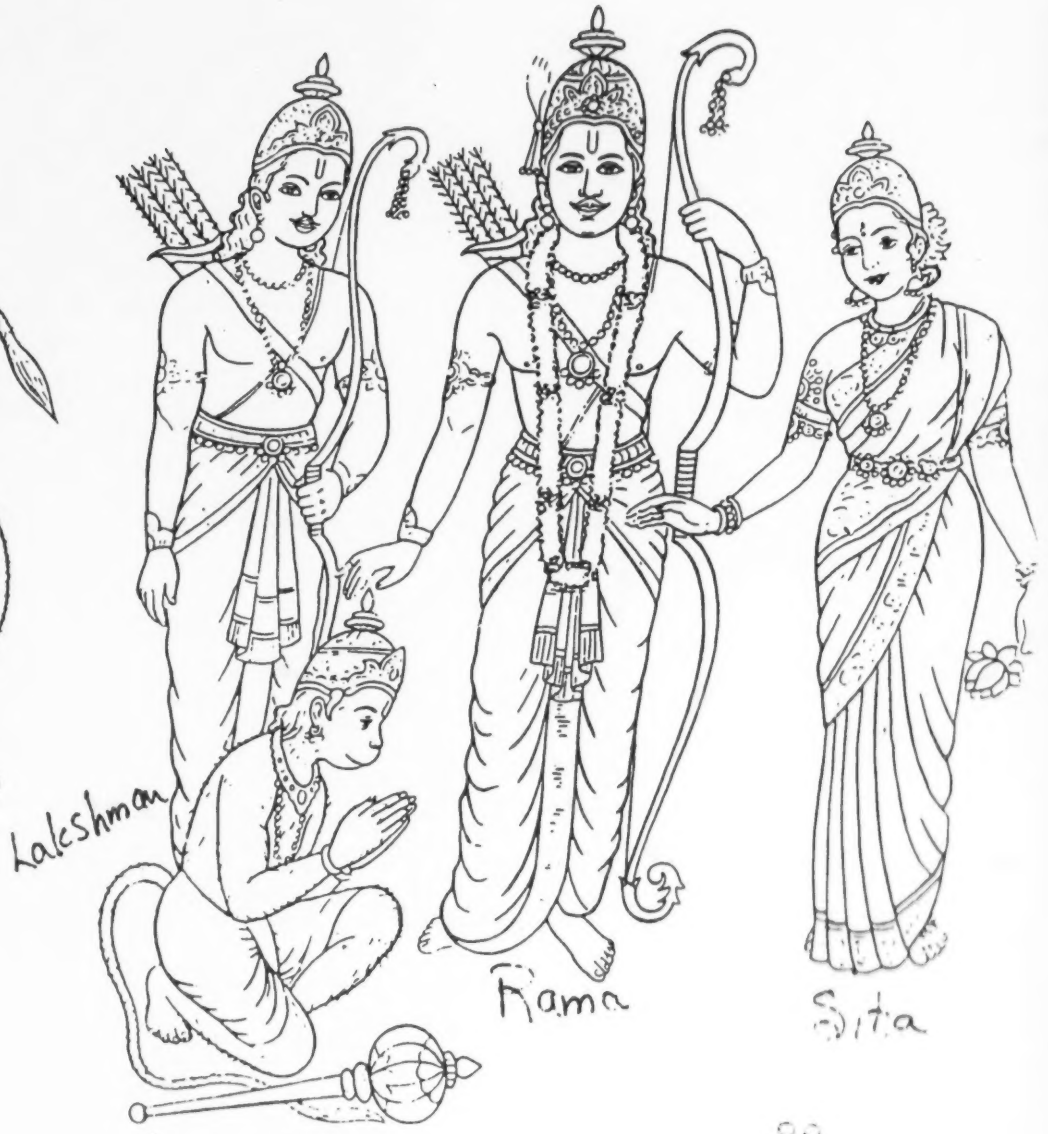


Rama

Guha

Sita

Hanuman



Hanuman